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PEEPS INTO MYSTICISM



BY

D. RAMASWAMY AYYANGAR,
ADVOCATE, MADRAS-7.

PRESENTED



FOREWORD

BY

Sriman M. ANANTHASAYANAM IYENGAR,
GOVERNOR OF BIHAR.



PUBLISHED

BY

THE VISISHTADVAITA PRACHARINI SABHA,
MADRAS-17.

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Skishuji



*Advocate
Madras.*

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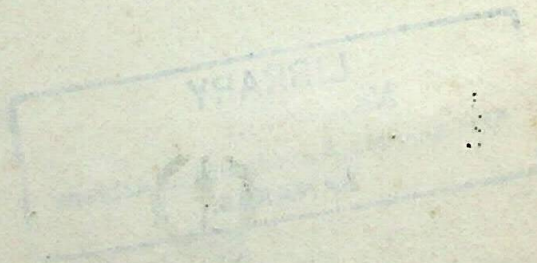
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BY
B. RAMASWAMY AYYANGAR
ADVOCATE, MADRAS.



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FOREWORD

BY

SRIMAN M. ANANTASAYANAM IYENGAR.

GOVERNOR OF BIHAR.

I have great pleasure in commending this book on the life, religion and philosophy of the Alwars to the English-knowing public. Alwars were Sri Vaishnava Saints of South India. They were the real propounders of Srivaishnava religion and Visishtadwaita philosophy in the South. All of them had realised the Lord during their lives. Some of them sang songs spontaneously and in ecstasy when they had a vision of His formless effulgence. Some others composed songs in praise of His beautiful form or His attributes and His different manifestations in forms and shapes in the universe. A few others condensed the philosophy of the Upanishads in mellifluous and flowing verses, which can be set to music. They were all great devotees of the Lord. They practised and preached devotion to Him and surrender to His will, as the sole means of attaining salvation. They all sang in Tamil and their songs number four thousand. The anthology of these songs is known as "Divya Prabandham" or the Tamil Scripture. They were the forerunners of Sri Ramanuja who systematised Vaishnava ritual and philosophy centuries later. But Sri Ramanuja wrote his works in Sanskrit. The contribution of the Alwars to the Visishtadwaita philosophy and even to Sri Ramanuja's later exposition thereof has, however, not been made known to the western world or to the English reading public as much as the Advaita system of philosophy of Sri Samkara.

Sriman D. Ramaswamy Ayyangar has undertaken, in this book, the task of popularising the works of the Alwars and familiarising the non-Tamilian

people with their lives and teachings. He is a great Tamil scholar and a good Srivaishnava. He is above all a very ardent devotee of the Lord and has great faith in the efficacy of the *archa* form of worship. He has given an exceedingly true and correct picture of the lives of these great saints. The book is both interesting and instructive and will certainly induce every reader to dive deeper into the works of the Alvars.

Alvar is a Tamil expression which when pronounced as ஆள்வார் (l as in flower) means literally one who rules, has mastery over another and commands him. The Alvars' teachings are the commands for laymen and in a way they commanded the Lord also by their devotion. Alvars are 12 in number, 10 of whom are the more important ones. These ten are believed to be the new Avatars of Mahavishnu who, it is commonly believed, incarnated Himself in the form of these saints to preach Sri Vaishnavism. No accurate life sketches of these Alvars are available, except those that have been handed down by tradition. It is, however, clear that they lived long before Sri Nathamunigal who was the first among the Acharyas (apostles) of Sri Vaishnavism and who was the grandfather of Sri Yamunacharya, at whose behest, Sri Ramanuja undertook to write a commentary on the Brahmasutras and the Bhagawat Gita.

The Alvars were all worshippers of Lord Vishnu as the Supreme Deity. They sang in praise of the Lord both as immanent in the Universe and as transcendent and beyond it. He appeared to them both as formless and with form. They believed that for the benefit of His devotees, the Supreme Being, Sriman Narayana, assumed forms, one in Sri Vaikuntam with divine attributes as Paravasudeva; next He appeared in the *vyuha* form in *Kshirabdi* or the milky ocean for the purposes of creation; on the earth, He took the form of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna and other

avatars; He dwells permanently in the hearts of *yogins*; and He is also immanent in the images in the Temples erected for the Lord. This last form is called 'archa'. To the Alvars, God was as real and immanent in the 'archa' form as He is real and transcendent in Sri Vaikuntam. According to them the one God Sriman Narayana, appears in two spheres, one in the transcendent, which they called *Nitya Vibhuti* and the other in the material universe which they called '*Lila Vibhuti*'. In His abode of Sri Vaikuntam, the eternal souls and the disembodied ones enjoy His beautiful form and His presence. To the souls bound by *samsara* in this world, He reveals Himself as *avatars* and in the temples. They realised the presence of God in the images or idols and sang in their praise with ecstatic joy and rapture. They also saw Him everywhere and in everything.

Their knowledge of God was not a mere intellectual perception, but went up to realisation. To them God was a living presence. He lived in them and they lived in Him. The lives of the Alvars were one of dedication to the service of the Lord. They did not conceive of God as one without attributes, as *nirguna Brahman*, but as one full of divine attributes. From their songs, it is clear that all of them enjoyed the presence and the company of God. Some worshipped Him as their father, some longed for Him as their beloved, some treated Him as their friend and companion, and others as their Master. Sri Andal, a female saint, wanted to marry Him and refused to wed any other than the Lord of the Seven Hills at Tirupati. She dreamt that God appeared to her as Lord Krishna and married her. She thereafter went to the temple only to get merged with the Supreme Being. Her songs portray her devotion to the Lord, the pangs of separation which became unbearable to her, and how she sought the aid of birds and beasts and even the elements, to convey her sense of separation and longing for the Lord. On the other hand

Sri Perialwar assumed the role of a mother, and fondled Him as Yashoda did Lord Krishna. When he had the vision of the Lord, he sang in His praise and wished Him well, instead of invoking His blessings upon himself. He was the father of Sri Andal and naturally he felt that he became the Lord's father-in-law.

The foremost of the Alwars was Sri Nammalwar, otherwise known as Sri Satagopan. He is considered the patron saint of Sri Vaishnavas. He avowedly composed his thousand and odd verses to explain in Tamil the philosophy of the *Upanishads*. He was known as '*Vedam tamizh seida maran Satagopan*' Maran who rendered the Vedas into Tamil. In his first 22 verses he expounds the philosophy of Sri Vaishnavism. He describes God as transcendent, as Truth, Knowledge and Bliss, and as full of attributes: God is also immanent in the creation. He was the first to expound in Tamil unequivocally the characteristic doctrine of Sri Vaishnavite philosophy, viz., the *sarira sariri bhava*, that the Universe is the body of a Universal Soul, of which body all things and beings are limbs. He propounded the theory of His *antaryamitva* or indwelling nature. He described the relationship of the individual soul to the Universal in several ways. He affirmed that salvation for the individual soul was through devotion and by surrendering to the will of the Lord. He described that the life here is real and that by serving the Lord's devotees, one would please Him. He further wrote that by performing one's karma or duty, one will attain a knowledge of one's own self which will lead to *vairagya* or detachment from earthly pleasures and will divert attention towards God; that God was not attainable merely by a knowledge of His nature, but that knowledge was only a means to *bhakti* or devotion, which alone was the means of attaining salvation. The attainment of heaven to Nammalwar was a positive act and accordingly meant the enjoy-

ment of bliss with the Supreme Being and not mere *kaivalya* or release from the cycle of births and deaths and remaining in one's true nature. The main work of Nammalwar is considered as inspired and a scripture by itself. Some Sri Vaishnavas believe him to be an *avatar* of Sri Vishnu, and that along with His incarnation, the Vedas were reborn as *Tiruvoimozhi*, his chief work.

Tirumangai Alwar, who has also sung more than a thousand verses, described the efficacy and importance of the name of the Lord. He travelled far and wide and his life was one of transformation from an ordinary erring mortal to that of one deeply devoted to the Lord. Madurakavi Alwar sang only in praise of Sri Nammalwar, whom he claimed as his Guru and saviour. He went to the extent of saying that he would sing in praise of his Guru even in preference to that of the Lord. Srivaishnavas believe in a hierarchy of Gurus or teachers starting from their immediate guru and concluding with the Lord Himself who was the first Acharya and from whom all knowledge followed. No Srivaishnava can attain salvation without the aid of a proper Guru. Besides, service and attachment to a devotee is of greater importance to them, than even the service to the Lord.

Though *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* (devotion and surrender) are described in the Bhagawat Gita as means of attaining Godhead, they got great impetus from the songs of the Alwars and the works of Ramanuja that followed them, so much so that ordinarily people believe that *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* as means of attaining Godhead, had their origin in the South.

After going through the Alwars' songs describing various Deities as God, one may wonder if the Alwars lost sight of the Upanishadic truth "*Ekam Sat*", that there is only one in the Universe and that is God. Though they all sang in Tamil and sang of God in

various shapes and forms, conceiving of Him as resident in several distant places, they never lost sight of the basic truth that there is only one entity in the world and that is God. Sri Samkara, the great exponent of the Advaita school of Vedanta, monism, interpreted the Vedantic doctrine of oneness in the Universe as meaning only the existence of a spirit which is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. To Samkara, the material universe was unreal and existed only in imagination due to ignorance or *maya*. He said that one individual alone existed and he was the spirit and God, and that all else was non-existent and a myth. Salvation could be attained by knowledge obtainable only by constant enquiry into the nature of the spirit or *atman* and auto-suggestion that one is Brahman himself. Further, to him God had no attributes but was *nirguna*. As there is only one being in the world, there is no place for *karma* or devotion or surrender as means of attaining Him. He said that the world conception of forms is unreal, but it may be used for meditation leading to self-realisation. Sri Samkara did not recognise the existence of matter or individual souls. The Alvars also based their conception of God and the Universe on the *Upanishadic* doctrine that God alone really exists and that there is nothing else in this world. They, however, postulate the existence of matter and individual souls as distinct entities existing eternally along with God, but forming part of His body, controlled and subservient to Him.

As in a human body composed of millions of cells, all formed out of a single blood stream, and a single consciousness controlling the body as a whole and every cell thereof, they conceived of the Universe as the body of a Universal Soul or Consciousness threading and holding together both matter and the individual souls alike. As the human body is one and is called as such though composed of a body and a spirit within, the Universe is God though it is composed of

matter and individual souls, as He permeates them and holds them together as His body. The Vaishnava is also an Advaitin but with this qualification. In his concept the world and life are both real though transient; the individual soul is an *anu* or atom whereas the Universal Soul is *vibhu* or all-pervading and the means of redemption for the individual from the cycle of births and deaths, is by devotion and absolute surrender to the will of the Lord. As life is real to a Srivaishnava, he must perform the duties relating to his *varna* or *ashrama* but in a spirit of service and dedication to the Lord. A true Vaishnava must see and realise God in humanity and render His worship by service to His creatures. The Vaishnavites' philosophy, their conduct and character and their relation to God, men and other beings are all imbued by this synthetic concept of God.

All these philosophic truths of Sri Vaishnavism have been brought out in the Divya Prabhandam of the Alvars in songs and stories so as to make the ideas easily appreciated by the lay public.

The Alvars were drawn from all communities and to a Sri Vaishnava all are equal in the eye of the Lord. Perialwar in fact, called all persons without restriction of caste or creed to gather with him together under a common banner and celebrate the festival of the Lord.

We are grateful to Sri D. Ramaswami Ayyangar for the many anecdotes that he has gathered in his book relating to the realisation of God by the Alvars and His qualities of *saubhaya* and *saushilya*. The only manner in which we can repay Sri D. Ramaswami Ayyangar for his labours is by trying to lead, in however small a measure, the life of the Alvars whose lives and teachings he has portrayed so well.

Governor's Camp: }
RANCHI.
30-7-'62. }

M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar.

INTRODUCTION

BY

Sri A. Srinivasaraghavan, M. A.

Dept. of Sanskrit, Thiagarajar College Madurai.

Like the Bhaktiyoga which is said to be pleasing both in its practice and fruition, this book "Peeps into Mysticism" is pleasant both for reading and recollection. It is in three parts. The first part entitled "The Mystics" gives us a brief sketch of the lives of the Alvars, Mystics *par excellence*, and a clear idea of their songs, which are the outpour of their mystic experiences in a realm about which we hear and talk much, but know little.

The second part, "Mysticism" introduces us to the blissful experiences of two of the Mystics,—Goda and Sathakopa. The first is the Eternal Bride who opens to us the vista of Bridal Mysticism,—Suddhanta Siddhanta,—both by her life and her songs. Her birth as a girl was by nature conducive to the development of love for the Lord,—the Purushottama, and it was helped by her being brought up by a devotee and saint of the first order,—Periyalvar. The second mystic is Sathakopa who is God-thirst incarnate with all its delights and disappointments, yearnings and wailings. Both of them contain within themselves all the experiences not only of the Vaishnavaites Alvars and Acharyas, but also of the devotees of other faiths and countries, as has been indicated by the occasional references by the learned author to other mystics of our own country and of the west.

The third part is "the Peeps" in which light is thrown on the peculiar life and nature of the mystics. The title 'Peeps' is quite appropriate; for the man of the world can have only an occasional peep into the beatific experiences of these mystics whose life is filled with God and God-love. Incidentally it reveals to us the mind of the author Sri D. Ramaswamy Aiyangar and his relationship with his God,—who curiously enough, bears the name of Varada, the All-giver, but has appropriated the author and his mind, all for Himself. Thus it is almost autobiographical in nature and content. The author excels himself in "Weeping for God", in "Archanubhava" and in "Neither here nor there".

It is a piece of good fortune to us that such beautiful essays are collected together and given in one book so that we, who, in this machine age, have little time and less inclination to think of God and the Godly, may withdraw into ourselves albeit for a short while, and think about God within, and see God without, and forget ourselves in the enjoyment of peace and bliss.

Madurai }
10-7-1962 }

A. Srinivasaraghavan.



PREFACE.

BY

Sri S. VARADACHARYA, Federal Court Judge (Retd.)

PRESIDENT,

The Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha, Madras-17.

The Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha gratefully accepts the proposal of Sri D. Ramaswami Iyengar, that his book "Peeps into Mysticism" may be published as one of the Sabha's publications. As the book is in English its publication will indeed be giving effect to one of the aims of the Sabha, namely, that some at least of the books explaining the Visishtadvaita system of Philosophy must be published in English. It was the view of the promoters that that system has not been as widely known as it ought to be, by reason of the fact that nearly all the works bearing on it are either in Tamil or in Sanskrit. Though this book does not in terms purport to deal with Visishtadvaita Philosophy, its treatment of the lives, teachings and experiences of the Alvars is in effect an exposition of the system which owes some of its basic features to the songs of the Alvars.

The qualifications of the Author and the subject-matter of the book have been sufficiently explained in the Foreword kindly contributed by Sri Ananthasayanam Iyengar. Elsewhere, I have myself mentioned some of Sri D. Ramaswami Iyengar's qualifications to deal with subjects of this kind (see my foreword to his Tamil booklet "Thotta Utsavam") Though the name of the book may suggest that it deals only with Mysticism in terms of the teachings and experiences of the Alvars, there are portions of the book which deal with allied topics as well. I commend the book as a contribution by a Bhakta who has himself been striving to transform his abstract religious learning into vivid emotional experience.

Govardhan. }
Madras-4, }
14-8-1962. }

S. Varadachari.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

BY

Sri S. Parthasarathy, B. A., M. L., I. Police (Retd.)

SECRETARY,

The Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha, Madras-17.

The Visishtadvaita Pracharini Sabha is indebted to Sri D. Ramaswami Iyengar for the privilege of publishing his book entitled "Peeps into Mysticism".

Such a book has been a long felt need of those who are unable to reach the works of the Alwars themselves directly in Tamil.

Sri Ramaswami Iyengar has to his credit a number of publications and this would be one of his valuable contributions on the mystic experiences of the great Vaishnavaites in whose footsteps he is anxious to follow.

The exposition in the form of a judgment, of the salient points of the three main systems of Hindu Philosophy will also be read with interest.

The Foreword by Sri M. Ananthasayanam Iyengar Governor of Bihar, another doyen among Vaishnavaites learned men, gives more in detail the excellences of this book. The publishers are also grateful to him.

Madras. }
15-8-1962. }

S. Parthasarathi.

ஸ்ரீ :

ஸ்ரீமதே நிகமாந்த மஹாதேசிகாய நம :

ஸ்ரீ பெருந்தேவிநாயிகா ஸமேத ஸ்ரீ தேவாதிராஜ பரப்ரம்மணே நம :

SAMARPAN.

This book I offer with reverence and humility at the lustrous and lovely Feet of Lord Sri Devadhiraja, the Presiding Deity of Kanchi.

Several of the articles included in this book were published in "The Hindu" and some in the "Kalyana Kalpataru" and "Sri Krishna". They are re-printed here by the kindness and courtesy of the respective Editors.

To the illustrious gentlemen who have truly enriched the book by a Foreword and a Preface respectively, I offer my respectful *pranams* in all thankfulness and gratitude. To my friends, Sri A. Srinivasaraghavan and Sri S. Parthasarathy Iyengar who have very kindly furnished an Introduction and a Publisher's Note respectively, I proffer my thanks for their kindness.

There are numerous misprints and errors in this book for which I tender my apologies to the readers and crave their pardon and indulgence.

Yatkaromi-yadasnaami-yajjuhomi-dadaamiyat!
Yat-tapasyaami, Bhagavan! tat-karomi tvadarpanam"

Madras,
23-8-1962 }
"Sri Jayanti"

D. Ramaswamy.

PART I
MYSTICS

PART I
MYSTICS

PRESENTED

LIBRARY
No.
Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Ashram
BANARAS.

NEW LAMPS FOR OLD

THE FIRST THREE ALWAYS

[THE BIRTH OF THE DIVYAPRABANDHAS]

It was night time. The entire sky was overcast with dark clouds, the intense blackness being torn asunder by frequent streaks of lightning accompanied by loud thunder. It was raining terribly. Man and beast sought shelter from the beating rain and blinding lightning. A stranger to the place walking along the streets of Tirukkovalur,—where the scene is laid—tried to bear up with fortitude, but when he could do so no more, sought shelter in a way-side house in that place. He knocked at the front door. The owner of the house opened it and the stranger made a request to him for shelter. The owner of the house said: "By all means. Please come in. There is room in this *dehali* (i. e. "Rezhi", in Tamil) for one person to comfortably lie down." So saying he admitted him into the *dehali* and himself went inside. The stranger bolted the front door and was preparing to lie down when he heard a knock on the front door. Stranger No. 2 in similar plight prayed for shelter. This time shelter was given to him by the first stranger who admitted him with the remark, "There is room enough for one person to lie down and for two to sit comfortably" As they were sitting in the darkness of that *dehali* and enquiring about each other, there was another knock at the front door, the third knock for that night. Stranger No. 3 sought admission which was readily accorded by the two inside with the remark, "There is certainly room enough for three to stand" The front door was once again bolted from inside. There were no further knocks on that door thereafter. But there were knocks on the souls of the three strangers and that happened in a very peculiar and mystifying way.

The first of them hailed from Kancbeepuram, the second from Mahabalipuram and the third from Mylapore. They had no relations or friends, and the life of each one of them was unmarked by any incident or episode. Even the parentage was unknown. They were all imbued with religious fervour and were moving from place to place worshipping the Gods and the Deities in the several sacred places for which South India has ever been famous. While they were recounting to one another the religious experiences gathered by each of them, they got a feeling that the *dehali* was getting more and more cramped and that the place became more narrow than they thought or found it to be before. A pressure, not caused however by any one of the three, was felt. Each began to ask how or why it happened. But no one was able to give an answer. The feeling of pressure increased. In the darkness it was not possible to find an explanation for the feeling that was creeping over them. It occurred to the first of them that unless the darkness was dispelled by light, the cause for the cramped feeling would remain undetected. He lit a lamp by his poetic and yogic power, constituting the entire world of matter as a lamp, the seven seas as the ghee, and the bright sun as the flame or *jyothis*. There was light. But in that light they were able to see one another. They were able to see the *dehali* in which they were all standing, but they were able to see no more. The feeling of pressure continued, but the cause of it was yet invisible.

Thereupon the second of them, the yogi from Mahabalipuram, thought that probably the object or Being exerting the pressure was one that could not be seen with the external eyes, for in spite of the fact that the external darkness had been dispelled, they were no wiser. A case had therefore been made out, he felt, for lighting a lamp which would dispel the inner darkness, the darkness of *agnana* or ignorance that had enveloped the soul, and he lit the second

lamp. This time Anbu (love) was the receptacle (lamp), yearning was the ghee, the mind pining away in bliss was the wick. As soon as this "Lamp of Gnanachchudar" (effulgence of gnana) was lit, the darkness of the soul was also dispelled, and before the eyes (the external and internal eyes) of the three, stood revealed the Person who was the cause of the pressure. It was the sage from Mylapore that first sang about what now stood revealed before their wondering eyes. This is how he sang: "I have seen Tiru (Lakshmi). I have seen a golden-hued beautiful figure (body). I have seen the lovely effulgence of Bala Surya (the rising sun): I have seen the bright Chakrayudha and the Shankha in the hands. All these I see today in my ocean-hued Lord."

The three seers who saw as above thereupon began to elaborate the glory of the Person they had seen. The Brahman of the Upanishads, had revealed itself unto them; and by their Tamil verses they restated the truths of the Upanishads in the language of the land, — Tamil. The "Divya Prabandham" was born.

In the very birth of the "Prabandhas" is seen a *Vailakshanya* or speciality. The srutis being *Anadhi* and *Apaurusheya*, no one knows when they came into existence or in whose presence they were first given out. The premier *Itihasa*, the *Ramayana*, was composed, we know, by Sage Valmiki and sung in the presence of Sri Rama. But even there Sita Devi was not by His side at that time. The "Divya Prabandha" however, came into being under the aegis of the Divine Couple, Narayana and Sri. They were the prompters of the "Prabandhas" and the first "Prabandhas" were sung and had their *Arangetrupadi* in Their immediate presence. No wonder therefore that men and women of this part of the country where Tamil is the reigning language have derived and are deriving the highest spiritual inspiration and instruction in

and through the "Prabandhas". The sayings of the ancient seers who have given to us the srutis have been verified in the personal experiences of the Alvars of whom the three mentioned above are the pioneers. These three Alvars are referred to as the Mudal-Alvars or the first Alvars. Tradition tells us that the first of them, Poigai Alvar by name, was born under the star Sravanam (Tiruvonam), the next Boodattalwar, under the star Dhanishta (Avittam) and the third, Peyalwar, under the star Satabishak (Satayam), all in the Tamil month of Arpisi or Aippasi, October-November.

Tirukkavalur, the place where the above incident took place and the "Prabandhas" first came into being, is held in great veneration even out of the 108 Divya Desas, for the reason that it gave birth to the earliest of the Tamil Prabandhas. The lamps that were lit in the *dehali* of a house in that *kshetra* are affording light to generations of seekers after truth. As Sri Vedanta Desika has beautifully put it in a Tamil verse, the Satya-deepa (Light of Truth) lit in a small *dehali* has dispelled the darkness throughout the country and illuminated the path of Vedanta. The Lord presiding over the *kshetra* has acquired new names which are not found even in the Sahasranama. All His devotees refer to Him with great devotion and love as Dehaleesa and Bhaktopamarda-Rasika (one who takes pleasure in being pressed and compressed by His devotees). Vedanta Desika has also sung about this *upamardha* or crushing in a sloka of his "Dehaleesa Stuti" wherein he refers to sugarcane in the shape of the Lord being crushed in a crushing mill constituted by the three Alvars, with the result that the sweet nectar of the Prabandhas began to flow out of it, just as sugarcane juice flows out of the crushing mill. And ever since then, the Lord of the entire universe rejoices in being referred to as the Lord of a Dehali.

Aippasi month is the month of the Deepavali. Is it mere coincidence that those who lit the earliest lamps of Vaishnavism were all born in this month of Aippasi, or is it an indication that the true Deepavali consists in the array of lamps lit by the Vaishnavite sages and intended for the illumination and delectation of all devotees of Sriman-Narayana?

It was Peyalwar who first saw and gave out the truth about the ultimate God-head. It is not Purusha or the masculine alone, nor is it the Stree or feminine alone, It is the blend, a happy blend of Tiru and Mal into a Tirumal, that is the *Tatwa*, the *Hita*, and the *Purushartha*. The old lamps of the ancient Srutis showed Them separately by separate *Sookthas*; but the new lamps have shown Them to be one and inseparable, like the *Deepa* and its *ruchi*, the lamp and its lustre.



BHAKTISARA.

(TIRUMAZHISAI ALWAR.)

“Kanikannan is going. O! Lord of beautiful Kanchi, with the colour of emerald! you shall not stay here. I, the daring and righteous-tongued poet, am also leaving. Pray roll up your serpent (adishesha) bed”. Thus spake a yogi before the Lord known as Vegaasethu in the shrine called Vehka (வெஃகா); and the Lord obeyed by getting up and following the yogi out of the town. And a day later at the bidding of the same yogi, He came back to the shrine and unfolded His bedding and reclined on it as ever: only He got His head pillowed on His left hand and not on His right as before. The yogi is Tirumazhisai Alwar. By this incident and His acting in obedience to the Yogi's behest, the Lord came to be known as Yathoktakari, or as Vedanta Desika has put it “Bhaktimatam Yathoktakari”. Yathoktakari means acting as per what has been said: Desika wants it to be made clear that the acting in this case was as per what was said by a true devotee of the Lord.

This Alwar was born in Tirumazhisai, a small village near Madras (about 16 miles to the west of it on the Bangalore Trunk Road) under the star Makham in the month of Thai. Mazhisai is the Tamil form of “Maheesara” the essence of the earth. Tiru is the prefix to denote its sacredness. It is said that like the first three Alwars (of whom he was a later contemporary) he was also an *Ayonija* (not born of woman) and a yogi. Like all the other Alwars, this Alwar has also sung in ecstasy about the Gods in the several shrines—Archavatara Emberumans. In this Alwar's case alone, however, some of those Gods have reacted to his devotion in a strange manner. — a manner quite inconsistent with their nature as Archa Moorties. One incident has been referred to above — the one relating to Yathoktakari. There are at least two others which

show the inordinate Bhakti or devotion of this Alwar which gave him the name of Bhaktisara, and how Gods in temples have reacted to that devotion. While at Kumbakonam worshipping in the shrine of Sri Sarangapani Perumal (The *Araavamudu* of Nammalwar), Tirumazhisai Alwar, enraptured at the Sayana pose, or restful repose, of that beautiful God, asked him the reason for it. "Are your legs aching? — the legs that walked this earth (from end to end as Rama)? Or was your body shaken far too much while you delved this trembling earth in the form of a Boar (Varaha)? What is the reason for your lying down and resting in Kudanthai (Kumbakonam) on the banks of the Cauvery, which spread itself far and wide after crossing all the hills and dales that came in her way? Please get up and answer." At this request made in a submissive tone and beautiful poetry, this Lord — whose name is Unsatiating Nectar (Aravamudu) it is said, lifted up His head and attempted to rise from His serpent (Adisesha) couch. Bhaktisara moved by this graciousness on the part of the Lord at once sang Vazhi Kesane (வாழி கேசனே) meaning, "You with beautiful locks of hair! May you live long and undisturbed!" The Lord stayed as he was at that moment. To this day this Perumal is seen as an Uttanasayee (உத்தானசாயி), — one lying down with head slightly raised.

The other place where an Archa Moorthy reacted similarly by transgressing the self-imposed limitations of Archa is Perumbuliyur, near Tiruvaiyaru in Tanjore District. Here the Alwar was not allowed to enter the shrine, but as he was going round the temple outside its precincts, the Lord was seen to revolve in His place looking always in the direction where the Alwar was at the moment. While it is true that the greatness of the Archa forms in the temples and the divinity in them have been demonstrated to us largely by and through the Prabandhas of all the Alwars, among whom Tirumazhisi Alwar is one, this Alwar has

demonstrated the potency of, and the living personality in, the Temple Deities in a very telling manner.

He has sung two poems or Prabandhas. One is called the Naanmugan Tiruvandadi (நான்முகன் திருவந்தாதி) which is the fourth prabandha in the Iyarpa (இயற்பா) group of the four thousand, and consists of 96 Pasurams. The other is Tiruchchanda Viruttam (திருச்சந்த விருத்தம்) of 120 Pasurams which is included in the Mudaliyaram (முதலாயிரம்). The first prabandha takes its name from the first word of that prabandha, and the other from the metre in which it is couched.

The main theme of Naanmugan Tiruvandadi is the supremacy of Narayana, the Consort of Sri(or Lakshmi), in relation to all other Gods. "Never think of any one as a Lord who has no Tiru" (Tiru is the Tamil name for Lakshmi) is his Upadesa to us in the 53rd verse of this work. In the next pasuram he sings that "all the learning of those who cannot feel that whatever is, is Nedumal (Trivikrama), is worth nothing." In another verse (50) he says that no one knows Him, his Lord of blue lustre, as he knows Him, and all the celestial worlds put together cannot be equal to his knowledge (of Him). என்மதிக்கு விண்ணெல்லாம் உண்டோலை? He winds up this work by asserting "I have now known you as the Lord of Brahma and Siva: I have now known you as my Lord: I have now known you as the primordial Cause, and as all that has been learnt and remains to be learnt: I have very well known you as Narayana." (96). Where the Sanskrit Upanishads very often end with the words "Ya-Evam-Veda" (He who knows thus), it is noteworthy that this Tamil Saint has asserted thrice இனி அறிந்தேன் (I have now known) and followed up the same with நன்கறிந்தேன் நான் (I have clearly and well known). The knowledge that was till then so difficult to obtain was evidently effortlessly intuited by this mystic.

According to tradition there is one other explanation for this Alwar asserting "I have *now* known". It is said of him that he studied each of the other schisms or schools of thought and practised each of them first hand, before he realised the highest truth as being enshrined in the Sri Vaishnava Siddhanta. Here he had the help and guidance of Peyalwar who is for that reason said to be his Guru.

Tirumazhisai Alwar's other work is "Tiruchchanda Viruttam". It is a very rhythmical form of verse. Though this work begins by employing several of the numericals strung together in pleasing symphony, (whose significance, however, will not be clear to an ordinary person unaided), in its later portion this prabandha blossoms into high-class mystic poetry. "He stood on a hill (Vengadam), sat in Paramapada, and laid Himself down in the sea of great waves (Ksheerabdi). All that was before I was born. Now that great Lord who is an அற்புதன் Arpudan (one with wonderful powers) who is அநந்தசயனன் Anantasayanān (reclining on Adishesha) who is ஆதிபூதன் Adibhootan (the first and foremost Being) and who is மாதவன் Madhavan (Consort of Sri) stands, sits and lies down, all within my heart". Such was the God-enveloping love of this Bhaktisara. His tip to us, wallowing in this world, is to sublimate our senses by closing up the channels through which they flow into sin, sealing those outlets with wax, and then diverting those senses into the higher regions of gnana by employing the alchemy of Anbu or love. "Except by Anbu who can dream of ever visualising the great Lord," (76) he asks. He implores of the Lord in verse 101 to so ordain that his mind, which is wont to spread itself out into this material world, becomes single-purposed and ever thinks only of His lotus feet. And soon after, he prays that he may ceaselessly repeat His name (103). No wonder this Alwar attains the highest here and now; and he sings of that attainment in the closing verses by saying that his soul has got emancipated and obtained ceaseless bliss.

SAINT SATAKOPA. (NAMMALVAR)

Even like Sankara and Ramanuja, the great Acharyas of South India, Buddha and Nammalvar, one of North India and the other of South India, were born under the same constellation, Vaisakha Poornima, full moon in the month of Vaikasi (Tamil) or Baisak. Importance being attached to the Poornima *tithi* by the followers of Buddha, his Jayanthi is celebrated as Buddha Poornima, whereas the star Visaka determines the birthday celebrations of Satakopa. Almost always the two will coincide, though in some years they may not.

Both Prince Siddhartha (the Buddha) and Poet Satakopa were actuated by infinite compassion towards suffering humanity. The sight of suffering and pain present in such large measure in the world drove the prince from the kingdom into exile. Satakopa was born a saint; for as his name itself indicates, he had conquered even at birth the *sala vayu* which envelops the soul, that is being ushered into the world, in *avidya* or ignorance, and exhibited none of the symptoms of an ordinary child. It is said that the babe did not cry, eat or drink. A saint to that extent even from birth, it is no wonder that he has become one of the outstanding leaders of Sri Vaishnavite thought and experience. As in the case of Buddha, with him also the ruling feeling was one of compassion, pity and sympathy towards all men wallowing in sin and suffering. If the Buddha was driven away from samsara by his sorrow, the Alvar's sorrow drove him to God, and in the very opening verse of his works, he cries out in agony to the Lord and prays to Him to release all men from false knowledge, impure conduct and filthy body. The Buddha is known as the Light of Asia. In the Alvar's case also, it was his effulgence that shone in distant Banaras, while he was in the extreme south of this peninsula, and dragged a scholar,

Madurakavi by name, all the way from Banaras to Alwar-Tirunagari in Tirunelveli district. The meeting between the two was the cause of the Alwar coming out of his Samadhi which began with his birth, and giving to the world his 1,296 Tamil verses, which have set the standard in devotional lyric poetry in Tamil, and paved the way for synthesising all the *srutis* into a homogeneous whole, as later demonstrated by Ramanuja. It was the intuitive experience and realisation of the Alwar that drew Ramanuja's attention to the *ghataka srutis* (as they are called) with the help of which the *beda srutis* and *abedha srutis* were united into a *Sarva-Samanjasa-Sariraka Sastra*.

Nammalwar is the chief among the 12 Alvars who have given to us the 4,000 verses called the Divya Prabandha. His God-relaisation was so full and complete that, as he himself has sung in several places, there is no barrier of space or time between this world and the world of the Lord called *Parama-padam*. Here and now, it is possible for any one and everyone to be a *mukta* by at-one-ment with the Lord, and attunement to His will. Like Prahlada and Vamadeva of the Puranas, Nammalwar had *Brahma Drishti* or God-vision in an extraordinary measure. Every thing that was seen or heard or otherwise perceived by the senses was God. It was not a mere mental apprehension of a feeling or thought. It was direct realisation. He sings that he will embrace fire knowing it to be such, calling it *Achyuta*, but would not get burnt. If a herd of cattle goes along, he would follow it, saying 'My Lord is here'. The sight of butter would impel him to cry out 'here is what my Lord ate'. He will follow a snake, saying 'Here is His bed'. If he hears the sound of a flute, he will go into a trance, saying 'Yonder is my Madhava'. 'I' and 'Mine' have completely yielded place to 'Thou' and 'Thine'. The sentiments of Thiruvoimozhi (IV. 4) starting with the words 'Mannaiyirindu Tuzhavi' have yet to be excelled in any devotional literature,

even if it be of the other Alvars. Equally unique is the advaitic "*aham-Brahmasmi*" experience of the Alvar in "கடல் ஞாலம் செய்தேனும் யானே" Tiruvoimozhi [V-6] wherein he thinks, talks, and acts as if he were himself the God of this universe.

In the excess of his love towards the Lord, he very often employs the language of eroticism, and there are several songs which are couched in the garb of love-lyrics. His pining away in *Vislesha* (separation) converts him into a woman, and he pours out the pangs of his unrequited love in impassioned poetry employing the language of sexual literature. Bhakthi or devotion now gets converted into *sringara*, and the Alvar sends out a cloud-messenger or a bird-messenger to the Lord of his heart: "Please request him on my behalf to pass once along my street before my stricken soul emerges from this body"; "seek him out anywhere and ask him if this is proper treatment"; and so on. In one of such moods the Alvar repels and rejects the overtures of the Lord by seeking to assault Him with hard words indicative of the pent up anger in the Alvar's heart caused by continued apathy on the part of the Lord towards the Alvar. (VI. 2)

The intensity of the God-love or rather the God-infatuation of the Alvar can be seen in all his four Prabandhas, Tiruvirutham, Tiruvasiriyam, Peria Tiruvanthadhi and Tiruvoimozhi. But there is one place in the Tiruvoimozhi in which the Alvar may be said to excel himself. In the first Tiruvoimozhi of the second hundred, he sees in all creation the signs and symptoms of the sickness of separation from God. The waning moon is losing in colour and weight, because, like the Alvar, it also pines away out of God-separation. The flickering flame of the dying lamp betrays to the Alvar its deep sense of sorrow at being separated from the Lord. And the ocean eternally wails out its heart in anguish out of

unfulfilled love towards a God who does not care to reciprocate. Divine madness cannot go further.

It is not mere emotion divorced from intellect. It is an emotion born out of Gnana. That is why it is called *Madi Nalam* or *Bhakthi Roopapanna Gnana*; or *semushee bhakthi roopa* in the language of Ramanuja. Mere gnana leads to dissection and vivisection of God and God-concepts, and can be of little or no help to the pursuer after it. Similarly, mere faith and fervour border on sensuousness and sentimentalism, and are apt to drown the seeker into vice and sin. A happy blend of gnana and bhakti is what is most beneficent to the human soul dissatisfied with wordly pursuits. Gnana must ripen into bhakthi; *gnanam-kanindanalam*. ஞானம் கனிந்த நலம். Knowledge divides, but love unites. Nammalwar has exemplified by his life and works the glory that a man can achieve by a happy blend of knowledge and love. Love towards God fulfils itself in the case of the Alwar in love towards the entire creation which is organically united with God, all beings and things being but His body. And that is why Nammalwar is sought after by man as much as by God Himself, Who, after a long long search found a person who could say 'All is Vasudeva', *Vasudevassarvam*. Ellam Kannan. எல்லாம் கண்ணன்.



MADHURAKAVI.

It is very significant that the name Madhura Kavi (meaning sweet-tongued poet) is borne among the twelve Alvars only by the one Alvar who has not sung verses in praise of the Lord, but has sung only in praise of the Lord's premier devotee Nammalwar. He begins his poem of praise which consists only of 11 verses, by singing that his tongue by uttering the names of Kurugoor Nambi (the great one born in Kurugoor, another name for Alvar Tirunagari, birth place of Nammalwar) experiences a sweetness and flavour not obtainable by the utterance of the name of the Lord Himself. And in the very next verse he says "I know of no God other than my Guru, Nammalwar (தேவு மற்றறியேன்).

The catholicity of outlook of the Vaishnavites in spiritual matters is also underlined by this Nammalwar-Madhurakavi Guru-Sishya-bhava (teacher-pupil relationship). The Guru was born in one caste whereas the disciple belonged to another caste. The disciple was an aged person but the Acharya was a *yuva*, a youth. One is reminded of the popular saying about Dakshinamurti and his disciples, aged disciples resorting to a youthful guru.

Tirukkooloor on the southern bank of the Tamara-parani River which is situate a little east of Alvar Tirunagari was the birth place of Madhurakavi. He was born under the star "Chitra" in the Tamil month of *Chitrai*—April-May. Having studied the Vedas and all the Shastras here, the great scholar went to Banaras for higher studies in philosophy. While there, his soul was seized with the higher disquiet born of indifference to material welfare and a *tvara*, (haste) to obtain early spiritual fulfilment. So he began to crave for an Acharya who can direct him in the right path, and secure for him spiritual solace and peace. Suddenly he got the vision of a bright efful-

gence on the southern horizon. Being unaccustomed to see a sun rising or setting in the southern horizon, he got up in amazement and wonder. At once he saw that light moving southwards. He realised it was a beacon light for his soul and following it travelled southwards for days and days, that light all the while keeping moving southwards, till when he reached Alwar Tirunagari, where it shot up to the zenith and disappeared. The seeker realised that he had come to the end of his journey and that his soul's quest was about to end too. On enquiry he learnt about the Bala (young) Saint Satakopa seated in Samadhi (trance) ever since his birth in the hollow of a Tamarind tree opposite the shrine of Adinatha, the presiding Deity of the place. At once he repaired to that spot and gazed with veneration and admiration on that Soorya (Sun) who had by his brilliance (effulgence) brought him there from distant Kasi. He saw a garland of Magizhambu (மகிழம்பூ), the Vakula flower, adorning the shoulders and chest of Satakopa and wafting its pleasant fragrance in all directions. "To me", thought Madhurakavi, "here is the Vakula-bhooshana-baskara (வகுள பூஷண பாஸ்கர)—Sun adorned by the Vakula flower, heralding the passing of the shadows of the night of ignorance and avidya, and the dawn of the day of divine bliss" He prostrated before Satakopa and called several times. But no answer. Growing doubtful about the saint's ever reacting to his mundane surroundings, Madhurakavigal posed a rather puzzling question, which must bring out an answer if at all the saint was going to open his lips to any one. He asked சித்தினிடத்துச் சிறியது பிறந்தால், எததைத்தின்று எங்கே கிடக்கும்?. If a small one is born out of Chit (Consciousness) what will it eat and where will it stay? Nammalwar who had not opened his eyes or his lips from his birth replied "அத்தைத் தின்று அங்கே கிடக்கும்" meaning "It will eat it and lie in it,"—a puzzling reply to a puzzling question. The question can be understood and has been understood in two different ways, depending on the meaning given to the

word Chit. If it is taken as meaning the Parama Chetana or God, the *siriyadu* (small one) will denote the individual soul, which is small or infinitesimal (அணு) by nature. If from the All-soul the individual soul sprouts, what will it eat and where will it have its being? The answer given will mean in this view, "it will live, move and have its being in the All-Soul",—an answer which Nammalwar alone can give; for to him alone the Lord was food, water and everything (உண்ணும் சோறு, பருகுநீர்.....எல்லாம் கண்ணன்'.

But the other and more popular meaning attributed to the question and answer is different. Here the Chit is taken to be the individual soul and the small one as the body. "If the soul gets affiliated to a body by being born in it, what will it eat and where will it lie." To the question as so understood, Alwar's answer must be taken to mean, "it will enjoy the pleasures and pains of the body and have its existence only in it." (This reminds one of the Upanishadic saying about two birds perched on a tree, only one of which eats its fruits). This is the state of the ordinary man of the world, who lives, moves and has his being in his body.

Madhurakavi realised at once that he had after all found his guru, and that too one of the stature of this great saint. He spent all his time with Satagopa, with the result that when later Satagopa began to pour out his mystic experience in mellifluous verse, he took it down and thereby preserved the same for posterity. Even as Madhurakavi had waited to secure an acharya, Nammalwar must have waited to get a proper disciple, and when he secured one, he poured out his soul in his disciple's bearing in the form of four prabandas, Tiruvirutham, Tiruvasiriyam, Periya Tiruvandadi, and Tiruvoimozhi. It is said that more than once during the course of giving out his experiences, Nammalwar got into a trance which lasted for 6 months each. It is one of the great features of

Nammalwar's prabandhas that they emerged simultaneously with the experience, அனுபவித்தபடியே பேசுகிறார், and are not records of recollections of enjoyment.

No wonder that the disciple swore by this Acharya even to the extent of regarding him as greater than God. In the history of religion, Madhurakavi is the second instance of steadfast faith in the saving grace of the Devotee in preference to that of the Deity. Satrugna in the Ramayana was devoted to Bharata, and through Bharata he worshipped Sri Rama. So too Madhurakavi says that he is sure to enjoy the beauty of the Lord's glorious form and figure as one of the benefits accruing to him by serving Nammalwar.

In the eleven verses constituting the only prabandham of Madhurakavigal, he has postulated the efficacy and potency of Acharya-Bhakti, by speaking of the greatness and glory of the Acharya, and how the Acharya can redeem the soul of the disciple from Sam-sara by his unbounded grace or *kripa*, of course, by invoking the Daya of Sriman Narayana who is also the goal of human endeavour. In the first five verses of the Prabandham known as Kanni-nun-siruttambu கண்ணி நுண் சிறுத்தாம்பு (which are the words with which it begins) Madhurakavi speaks of how he approached and relied on the saint of Kurugoor (Nammalwar) as his all, and in the second five verses how the Acharya functions to secure to the disciple the saving grace of the Lord of Sri. One phrase occurring in the 10th verse is very significant and shows how the acharya out of his grace towards the disciple corrects the disciple and enlists him in the *góshti* (group) of those who serve the Lord and His devotees. It is திருத்திப் பணி கொள்வான், meaning "will correct errors and erring ways, and make of him a true and loyal servant". In Saivite literature there is a very similar term தடுத்த ஆட்கொள்ளல் which means that we will be weaned from the path of sin pursued by us and made to serve, (the Lord). This sentiment given

expression to by Sundaramoorthy Nayanar refers to the Lord, whereas Madhurakavigal's reference is to the Acharya or Guru.

Madhurakavi's prabandham is held in high esteem by all Sri Vasihnavites and has been ranked on a par with the mystic utterances of the other Alvars exuding God-love. It is one of the 24 prabandhas that go to make up the Divya Prabandham. It is included in the *Mudal-ayiram* or first thousand, as its very last prabandha. It is prefixed and suffixed to the recitation of Nammalwar's Tiruvoimozhi, even like the sacred *pranava* in relation to the ancient Sanskrit Vedas.

There is an ancient saying which, while doubting the efficacy of following God, positively asserts the unfailing efficacy of following the Lord's true followers. Madhurakavigal has demonstrated the truth of that saying to the world by relying on the Alwar's grace to the exclusion of the Grace of the Lord. For as Vedanta Desika has nicely put it he is அருமறைகள் தமிழ் செய்தான் தானே கொண்டு துன்பற்ற மதூரகவி—Madhurakavi who freed himself from all sorrow by relying solely on him who rendered the Vedas into Tamil,—Saint Satakopa.



KULASEKHARALWAR.

Masi Punarpoosam day every year is the birthday of Sri Kulasekharalwar. As his name Kulasekhara indicates, he was one of the kings that ruled over the Chera or the Malayala (Kerala) kingdom in South India. In one of his pasurams he has described himself as 'Kolli Kavalan, Koodal Nayakan, Kozhikkone, Kulasekharan'. The word Kolli must stand for 'Kollam', the modern 'Quilon'. Koodal is Madurai and Kozhi is Kozhikode (Calicut). He evidently ruled over tracts of which the modern Quilon, Madurai and Calicut were the capitals. Several rulers of the Chera Kingdom have been known for their deep piety and devotion, but this particular king was a devotee of such a high order that he has been ranked as one among the Alwars.

There are two works, one in Sanskrit and one in Tamil, which are ascribed to this King. The Sanskrit work is the well known Mukunda Mala, and the Tamil work is the "Perumal Tirumozhi", consisting of 105 pasurams, which is part of the first thousand out of the four thousand Diyva Prabandhas. Doubt has been thrown in some quarters whether the same Kulasekhara is the author of Mukunda Mala and the Tamil Prabandham (Perumal Tirumozhi). Some believe that it is one and the same person that sang the Mukunda Mala and the Perumal Tirumozhi, while others are inclined to take the view that the two Kulasekharas must be two different persons. The intensity of devotion and the facility of expression that are to be found in the Mukunda Mala and in the Perumal Tirumozhi are in favour of the view that they are both works of the same author, while the Sanskrit Kulasekhara's fascination for Lord Sri Krishna, and the infatuation of the Alwar to Ranganatha and Rama is likely to lead to the other view.

According to tradition King Kulasekhara was a very great Bhakta, and while ruling over his

kingdom without fault or blemish, was at the same time leading the life of a great devotee, proving thereby that there is nothing inconsistent in pursuing life in this world according to one's *varna* and *asrama*, and being also a true devotee of the Lord. From his seat on the throne he was able to sing in all sincerity, 'I do not desire the pleasures and riches of a king, seated on the neck of the State elephant', 'He alone is a king who fervently wears on his head the feet of Sri Rama—the only King ever.' The crown that he would like should adorn his head is not the crown of a kingdom but Sri Rama's Feet, and true to this sentiment he calls himself "Mal-Adi-Mudimel-Kolamam-Kulasekharan. The possession of riches and the feeling of *Vairagya* are not inconsistent or incompatible. Water can be seen to stay on the lotus leaf to which it is in no way attached.

It is said that devotion to God developed in the case of this Alwar into devotion, love, and esteem to a remarkable extent towards the Lord's devotees. The result was that the palace of this King was thrown open to all Vaishnavites who were, or professed to be, Sri Vaishnavites. Naturally this freedom and liberty accorded to ordinary men in the palace of a King did not find favour with the servants of the State. To create displeasure against the Vaishnavites in the mind of the King, the palace officials conspired together and arranged to have a valuable jewel of the palace-God, worshipped by the King, removed stealthily; and when the loss was discovered, it was hinted to the hearing of the King that no one can be sure of valuable things being safe when all and sundry in the name of God have access to every nook and corner of the palace. The King, whose faith in the devotees of the Lord and their integrity knew no bounds, resented this insinuation, and at a public Darbar challenged those who complained against the Vaishnavites to prove their case in one of the ancient modes of taking oath. It was this. A hungry, and hence

angry, serpent was put into a pot and before the people assembled the person who believed in the truth of his contention would put his hand into the pot with the oath "if my case is true, let me be unhurt, if it is false, let the serpent sting me". It is said that the palace people refused to undergo this ordeal; immediately the King himself proclaimed "I swear that the followers of Vishnu were not guilty of taking away the lost jewel. Let this serpent in the pot demonstrate it." He inserted his hand into the pot. The serpent merely kissed his hand. Such was the King's faith in the integrity of a true Vaishnavite. One is reminded of what the Lord Himself is said to feel about His devotees whenever an accusation is brought to Him against one of them. Says Periy-alwar "Even if Lakshmi Herself complains to the Lord against a devotee, the Lord would say, "My followers would never do so; If they did, they did right". Kulasekhara is known as Kulasekhara Perumal. Probably the reason for it is that he has exhibited in real practice and conduct that great trait which Perumal alone is said to possess, of doting on His devotees and holding them in high esteem.

Sri Rama among the Avatars and Sri Ranganatha among the Archas exercised great fascination over the mind of Kulasekhara. Several persons there are and have been who are wont to listen to the exposition of the Ramayana without being moved to the slightest extent. Kulasekhara, however, is said to have been very deeply affected by the incidents of the Ramayana as they were narrated by the *Pauraniks*. On one occasion it is said that when Valmiki's description about 14000 Rakshasas of cruel deeds having arrayed themselves against a single Rama, a Dharmathma, was being read and expounded, Kulasekhara became so agitated at the helpless plight of Sri Rama, that he cried out to his Commander-in-chief to gather his armed forces and march forth for Sri Rama's help.

In his work known as Perumal Tirumozhi, there are three Tirumozhies or *padikams* of about ten stanzas each relating to Sri Ramavatar. In the first of them the Alwar sings lullaby (Talattu) to Sri Rama. In the second of them he becomes Dasaratha and bemoans Rama's departure to the forest. It is difficult to read this Tirumozhi without being moved to tears. The language and the sentiments are so realistic and so touching. In the third, which is really the last deead of Perumal Tirumozhi, he gives a brief summary of the Ramayana, of all the seven *Kandas* from Rama's birth to His ascent to His eternal abode in ten verses. This Tirumozhi is really a *Samkshepa Ramayanam* in Tamil.

Kulasekhara's love towards Ranganatha is even more pronounced. In the opening Tirumozhi of his Prabandha he longs to have a vision of the grand sleeping Lord of Srirangam who reclines on the thousand-hooded serpent, His feet being fondly caressed by the soft-lapping waves of the Cauvery, and to mix in the court yard of the shrine at Srirangam with the thousands of devotees gathered there to pay homage to that beautiful Lord. It is impossible here again to read these *pasurams* without ourselves feeling at least some desire to rush up to Srirangam and to Ranganatha.

It has already been pointed out that this Alwar's regard and respect for the devotees of the Lord were of a very high order. The 2nd Tirumozhi is accordingly in praise of the Lord's devotees. In it the Alwar points out that there is no greater profit or pleasure for the eyes than to look at a gathering of the *Meyyadiars* (true devotees) of Ranganatha who dance in ecstasy out of feelings of love towards the sweet Honey that resides in Srirangam. To Kulasekhara the ordinary people of the world who run after food and raiment appear to be mad men. At the same time he is aware that to them he will appear to be a mad man. He

admits his madness in the next Tirumozhi. "Only" he says, "I have become mad after God."

Vithuvakkodu (Tirumuthakkodu) is a shrine near Pattambi in Malabar and is on the road from Shoranur to Guruvayur. That is the subject matter of one of the Alwar's Tirumozhies, the fourth decad. This Tirumozhi is very noteworthy; for it brings out a very special, if not an essential, feature of the Visishtadvaita Siddhanta. To most of us who have imbibed the idea of Providence from the Westerners, God is there, whether in heaven or earth, only to provide for our wants. He is there to give us our daily bread. The logical result of this view of God is that when He fails to provide, He ceases to be Providence. The Indian systems of thought, the Visishtadvaita Siddhanta in particular, have blended God and the human soul into an organic unity with the result that God is our only support and saviour, and this holds good as much when he protects us and provides for our needs, as when He rejects us and torments us. Valmiki has made Sita Devi voice this beautiful sentiment by remarking that even if her husband had not been such a great and good person but had been a *Vritta-Varjita* (one who had abandoned good and upright conduct), still her love towards him would have been the same. This is contained in her reply to Anasooya in the penultimate *sārga* of Ayodhya Kāṇḍam. "Even if you spurn me" says Kulasekhara similarly, to the Lord of Vithuvakkodu, "I have no one else to look up to; like a child put aside by its mother in anger, like the true wife illtreated by her husband, like a citizen looking up to the king though he be a despot, like the lotus which unfolds itself only to the burning rays of the sun, and like the crops that always look up to the clouds that never come, I look up to you and rely on you and you alone, even though you do not want me". A very rare idea, a very difficult concept, has been very beautifully brought out in this Tirumozhi which has no equal elsewhere even among the 4000 verses.

The best known stanzas of Kulasekhara Alwar however, are those which relate to the Lord of the Seven Hills, Tiruvengadamudayan. For here the Alwar's God love has assumed an extraordinary aspect. To be near Him, to gaze at the beauty of His Coral Lips, the Alwar is willing to forego even the essence of his soul, which is *gnana*, and become an inanimate, senseless, and thoughtless object. After saying that he does not care for the riches of the earth or even for paradise, and would rather be a bird on the Hill, or a fish in the tanks, of Tiruvengadam, he goes on to desire the state of a worm, a hill-crest, a river, a pathway, or even a step, in that sacred Hill. He winds up by saying "I am prepared to become anything in the Golden Hill of my Lord". This again is a very rare mentality, not easily seen elsewhere in religious literature.

Krishna, the sweet Enchanter, has claimed the attention of this great Bhakta in two Tirumozhies. In the first of them he puts himself in the place of Devaki, the mother who gave birth to Krishna, and weeps and wails over the miserable fate of that lady who was obliged to give up the Divine Child born to her to the care and custody of another, to whom alone was given the transcendental bliss of enjoying His lovely child-hood from stage to stage, and watching with delight His numerous playful pranks. In the other Tirumozhi he assumes the role of a Gopi who has found out what a "Blackguard" this Black God (Krishna) really is, and assaults Him in the excess of her love towards Him, and accuses Him of several misdeeds and breaches of faith. It is delightful reading. This pitch of God-love which dares to spurn Him in the excess of unrequited love finds a parallel in a Tiruvoimozhi of Nammalwar, (VI: 2) and in the ecstatic Ashtapadi of Jayadeva.



VISHNU-CHITTA

(PERIYALWAR.)

Close both your ears tightly and you will hear or feel a peculiar noise. Various explanations have been attempted why there is such a noise then. But the Saint of Srivilliputtur says it is the sound of the waves of the milky ocean in his heart, in the middle of which spreading a couch, soft and fragrant, the couch of Adishesha (the several-hooded Serpent King) the Lord and His Consort Lakshmi recline in comfort. No wonder he is named Vishnu-chitta (one who has Vishnu in his heart). He is also known as Perialwar, Pattarpiran, and so on.

He was born in Srivilliputtur, now in the Ramanathapuram District of Tamil Nad. He was a Brahmin as his name Pattar-piran indicates. He was a great devotee of the presiding Deity of that place whose name is *Vata-patra Saayi* (வட பத்ர சாயி) one who reclines on the banyan leaf. He reared a fine flower-garden (Nandavanam) and used to offer flower garlands and Tulasi to the Lord daily. He took very great interest and pleasure in this Kainkarya (holy service). One night the Lord appeared in his dream and asked him to go to the Vidvat Sadas that the king of Madurai was convening with a view to ascertain for himself who was the Supreme Being to whom the whole world owed allegiance, as there were several theories and schools of thought about that Being. Though Vishnu-Chitta was by no means a scholar and normally would not have thought of participating in a Sadas of that type, he implicitly obeyed the Lord's command communicated to him in the dream, and repaired to the King's court and participated in the Sadas on the appointed day. When his turn came, he found himself to his surprise discoursing with such coherence and vehemence on the Superiority of

Sriman Narayana and the greatness of Srivaishnava Siddhanta as a philosophy of religion, supporting his statements by quotations from the Scriptures, that not only the King but even the other Vidvans who had assembled there and belonged to other schools of thought were made to realise the greatness of the system expounded by him. The King was so pleased with Vishnu-chitta's exposition that he honoured him in the right royal style and arranged for a procession through the streets of Madurai for Vishnu Chitta seated on an elephant. As if to enjoy this unique honour done to His devotee, the Lord Himself seated on His Vahana (Vehicle) Garuda, appeared with all His beauty majesty and glory. Vishnuchitta saw Him and felt the magnanimity with which the Lord was actuated, as a result of which He gave His dharsan to him and to the large concourse of people thronging the streets. In a trice he forgot His greatness, supremacy and prowess about which he had discoursed so eloquently in the King's court a little while ago. A great fear seized him that some evil eye may be cast on Him and His beauty, to the sight of which human eyes are not accustomed, and that some evil may befall Him because of such evil eye. At once he burst into song praying for, or rather blessing Him with, long life and every prosperity. பல்லாண்டு பல்லாண்டு பல்லாயிரத்தாண்டு, பங்கோடி நூறாயிரம்....உன் சேவடி செவ்வி திருக்காப்பு. (Many many years, many many years, many many thousands of years..... may the beauty of Your ruddy feet be protected unhurt). Such a mentality and such a song can only be the outcome of overwhelming love towards God, so overwhelming that it makes one forget His great *Shakti* (power) and reduces Him to the state of an object of protection, though in truth and fact, He is the protector of the world. This overwhelming love, has been beautifully described by a very great Acharya as an undying immense whirlpool of love (சோராத காதல் பெரும் சுழிப்பு) For it is only in a whirlpool that the water above plunges down below, and the

water down below is swirled up. So too this small protected being that is man, when caught up in the whirlpool of love, rises up, and poses as the protector, whereas the true and high-placed Protector is pushed down by the force of love to the lower status of a protected person. The Saivite Saint Manickavachaka in his Tiruvachakam very appropriately refers to such people whose love is so immense as to drown their intellect as பள்ளம் தாழ் உறு புனலில் கீழ் மேலாகப் பதைத்து உருகுமவர். (Those who quake and shiver all over, and melt away in love, and change places even like the waters of a waterfall which by their very force push up the waters down below.)

Vishnuchitta thus blossomed into a poet, a mystic and an Alwar not merely Alwar *simpliciter*, but a Peria (Big) Alwar. This is not to say that other Alwars are small, but to emphasise a very notable feature of this Alwar which consists in exhibiting parental love towards God and in blessing Him with long life. In Vaishnavite parlance this is called Mangalasanam (மங்களாசாஸனம்) or wishing for, desiring, and praying for, Mangalam or auspiciousness (welfare). Aseervadam (blessing) is what a superior person utters or invokes in regard to an inferior; when an inferior invokes the welfare of a superior person, it is called Mangalasanam.

This peculiar mentality of this Alwar converted him into a Yasoda and made him enjoy the pleasures and ecstasies of maternal love towards Lord Sri Krishna. The major portion of his prabandham called Periyalwar Tirumozhi with which the *Mudal-ayiram* (first thousand) of the Divya Prabandham opens, and which consists of 473 verses, is taken up by what is known as Pillai-t-tamil (பிள்ளைத் தமிழ்) or the enjoyment of the infant and boyhood stages of a God, here Sri Krishna. The first decad is known as Tiruppallandu because of its opening words; and every recitation of the 4000 Prabandham in temples and houses is normally

done only after the recitation of this decad. In the very next decad the Alwar sings about Sri Krishna's birth and goes on in the succeeding decads to put Him in the cradle and sing lullaby to Him, and call to Him with extended hands to toddle towards him, to invite Him to come and bathe and to wear flowers and so on. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Periyalwar Tirumozhi I—2 to III—6 is a Tamil version of the early portion of the Dasamaskandam (10th Canto) of Srimad Bhagavatham dealing with Krishna's birth, infancy and boyhood.

It is only from IV—1 that this Alwar deals with several sacred shrines such as Tirumalirunjolai (Alagar Koil) Tirukkottiyur, Tiruvarangam (Srirangam) and so on. Several of the sentiments voiced by him in his Tirumozhi show his intense devotion towards God. He counts among his hungry days (பட்டினி நாள்) not those days in which he starves, but those in which he does not resort to the Lord with the flowers culled from the Vedas. He advises people to name their children with the names of the Lord so that when calling them they will be necessarily uttering the names of the Lord and thereby unwittingly earning the merit of having repeated the Lord's names. To Lord Ranganatha he pays humble obeisance even now so that He may come and protect him during his last moments when he may in all probability be unable to think or talk. அப்போதைக்கு இப்போதே சொல்லி வைத்தேன். Here and now I have made my request to enure at that time when life will be ebbing away from this body,—a request and a prayer made in advance. He winds up his Tirumozhi by exultingly speaking of how the Lord has taken His seat within him (உனக்கு இடமாய்) and how fondly He has come and settled in his heart after rejecting and renouncing His glorious bed in the midst of the cool ocean and his soft couch in the shape of Adishesha. There is one passage here which shows the appropriateness of his having been named Vishnu-chitta. உன்னைக்கொண்டு

என்னுள் வைத்தேன், என்னையும் உன்னில் இட்டேன். [I have placed you within me, and I have placed myself within you.] In other words the Alwar has Vishnu in his chitta or mind, and similarly he is in Vishnu's chitta or mind. Thus the two possible meanings of the compound word Vishnu-Chitta are both rendered equally true and valid in his case.

No wonder the Lord thought that this Alwar must be blessed and honoured in a unique manner. With that idea the Lord gave him the opportunity of being the foster-father of Goda, that divine girl-devotee *par-excellence*. The Nandavanam (flower garden) that the Alwar reared for the use of the Lord yielded up to the Alwar a new and lovely creeper,—a Kalpakalata in the shape of Goda. The Alwar reared that swarnalata (golden creeper) with great care till it entwined itself on that glorions Hari Chandana Tree called Ranganatha. When Goda became the bride of Ranganatha, by that very fact Periyalwar became His father-in-law, and obtained a very appropriate status in regard to Him entitling him to sing Pallandu to Him for ever. Is there any wonder in the world fondly and lovingly referring to him as Periyalwar ?



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G O D A - D E V I

(A N D A L)

[THE DIVINE DAMSEL OF DRAMIDA DESH.]

In almost all the Sri Vaishnavite temples of South India, festivals in celebration of the Marriage of Lord Narayana with Sri Mahalakshmi, and of the Marriage of Lord Narayana with Andal (whose Sanskrit name is Goda) take place, the former on Panguni Uttiram day, and the latter twice, once on Adi Pooram day and again on the Bhogi day every year. A devout friend of mine who invariably worshipped at these festivals with great fervour asked me once if I noticed or felt any difference between the two marriages, and without waiting for an answer, said with an apparent touch of emotion that at the Marriage of Narayana and Sri he feels as if he is celebrating the Shashtiabda-poorti marriage of his parents, but that as he worships at the festival of Andal's marriage he feels as if he is himself getting wedded. That seemed to me to be a very forceful way of pointing out that while Lakshmi is part of Iswara Tatva (Principle of ultimate Godhead) far above us, Goda symbolises in herself the individual soul seeking union with the Lord, and as such stands out as a model and example for all Jivas. That is Andal's very unique position and explains in a large measure the intimate appeal her life and works convey to the ordinary man and woman.

If Lakshmi came out of the ocean of Milk when it was churned on that memorable occasion for Amrita (Nectar), Andal made her first appearance as a tiny baby under a Tulasi plant in the garden that Sri Vishnuchitta (otherwise known as Perialwar) reared for the service of the Lord of Sri Villiputtur, — *Vata-Patra-Sayi*. Andal had thus the great good fortune of being brought up by a devotee of the fervent type of Perialwar. She very soon became Sri Vishnuchitta-kula-nandana-kalpa-valli. (the creeper of Kalpaka sprout-

ing from the flower garden of Vishnuchitta) as Vedanta Desika calls her. She is indeed even to this day the Kalpavalli (a giver of boons) to every one who has Vishnu in his chitta or heart. For, the Lord gives of His bounty to us only at her behest. She has bound Him body and soul,—His body by her Poomalai (garland of flowers) and His soul by her Pamalai (garland of verses.) and having thus lost His independence He obeys her mandate and extends His grace to us, sinners.

The story of Andal is as sweet as it is short. Like Sita Devi she was an Ayoniya (born of no one) and had for a foster father a very great and devoted person. There it is was Janaka—a great karma yogi. Here it was Periyalwar whose God-Love was so intense and immense that he assumed the role of the Lord's own protector by singing Pallandu (many many years) to Him. While Sita and Rukmini were born in Kshatriya families Andal was brought by a Pattarpiran, a premier Brahmin. Andal is said to be the Incarnation of Bhoo Devi (Mother Earth). Gandha or smell is the peculiar feature of earth, and it is the smell of the flowers that she wore that made her dear to the Lord of whom she was very fond from her childhood. It is said that Goda used to wear the garlands and flowers which her father devoutly made for the Lord of Sri-Villiputtur. The father when he came to know of it felt it was a great apachara (sin) to offer used garlands to God and withheld the flowers from God. But God made known to the Alwar that nothing pleased Him so much as the flowers and garlands which were first worn by Goda. By her contact she imparted a rare and ethereal fragrance to them which they did not possess before. He the Sarva-Gandha (ஸ்ரீவந்த:) who had the perfume of the Vedas in His Feet, the fragrance of the lotus (which gave birth to Brahma the creator of all) in His navel, and the alluring smell of the high class sandalpaste of Sri (Mahalakshmi) in His chest, yet desired the *aamoda* (fragrance) of

the flowers worn by Goda, with such an avidity indeed that discarding His Vanamala of great fame He received Goda's garland with bent head. Vishnuchitta understood only then the greatness of his child Goda whom he had nurtured as his own daughter. Fully convinced that she had been sent to him as a divine gift for his spiritual uplift he called her Andal (she who is a protecting ruler). And from that time onwards only those garlands sanctified by contact with Goda were offered and accepted. Vishnuchitta's Andal became the Lord's Soodikkoduththa Nachiyar (a consort who first wore the flowers and then gave them to Him), and Vishnuchitta himself become a Periyalwar, the Alwar *in excelsis*, by carrying Goda-worn garlands to the Lord.

No wonder that such a divine girl was very much unlike all other girls from early childhood. Even when she had not learnt to properly wear her frock or petticoat, she lisped out the names of God and drew diagrams of Him and His divine weapons, the shanka, chakra and so on. The only stories she would listen to and never got tired of were the stories of Rama and Krishna. Lord Sri Krishna especially exercised such a magic spell over the heart of this sweet little girl that He became the object of her special love and affection. As she grew in age and stature her God-Love also grew in dimension and intensity, and she determined not take any but Him in wedlock. She dreamt of her being wedded to Him and she has sung of that wonderful dream in classical verse. Her dream became true very soon. She was sent for by Lord Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam, and when she repaired from Sri Villiputtur to Srirangam she merged into that Lord, her beauty and lovelines were swallowed up by that Sleeping Beauty of Srirangam. Or, as a more happy version of the same story would have it, Sri Ranganatha went to Sri Villiputtur and wedded her with all the rites pomp and paraphernalia attached to a wedding. And He remained at Sri Villiputtur as

Ranga Mannar in which form He is still seen there as an Archa along with His sweetheart—Andal.

That is Andal's life story shortly told. Her songs, 173 in number, are even sweeter and more sacred. Her Tiruppavai is too well known to be dilated upon here. It is regarded as an Upanishad. It contains the quintessence of Visishtadvaita Siddantha and Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya. And at the same time it is a Tamil lyric and a pastoral poem of a very high order.

Besides the 30 stanzas of Tiruppavai there are 143 other stanzas of this wonderful child of Tamilnad which have set the standard in erotic literature. Addressed to God this erotism is as pure as it is intense. In fact as Vedanta Desika has beautifully put it, the Alvars—all of them males—have tried to enjoy God in the same way as Goda, and in the attempt have donned the costume of a female and tried to dabble in the language so peculiar to the feminine species, modelling themselves entirely in the fashion of Andal. But what came to them by a mental effort came to Andal easily and naturally. Her love and devotion were one, whereas the Alvars had to twist and transform their Bhakti into sringara to have a peep into the lofty regions of bliss, Andal's sringara was itself Bhakti as it was directed towards the Lord. The advantage she had there is apparent in every line of her love-laden songs.

[A theory has been trotted out in recent times that Andal is not a historic person but is merely the creation of the fertile imagination of a section of Sri Vaishnavas who have attributed to her the authorship of a portion of the songs of Periyalwar couched in feminine language and for that purpose given her a separate individuality and a name. The only two things that can be said of this theory are its novelty and its daring disregard of tradition and devout belief.

To the sponsors of this fanciful theory one can only recommend a study of human psychology with special reference to man-psychology and woman-psychology. Only after such a study can they understand the impossibility of some of the 173 stanzas ever emanating from a man's heart, voice or pen.]

The essence of Andal's poems is Krishna-Prema. Her Tiruppavai is about Krishna from beginning to end. Even her other poem—Nachiyar Thirumozhi, as it is called,—exudes Krishna love. Krishna has had several abuses hurled at Him,—by His parents when He was mischievous, by His playmates when He was exceptionally teasing, and by His consorts in later life whenever they suspected His fidelity towards them. But the epithets that Andal uses to depict and describe Him stand on a class apart. She calls Him as the one who tells white lies, as the mischief-monger who is ignorant of Dharma, as that person who never knows to say 'Don't fear', as in short the one who is as black inside as He is outside, black of heart and black of body,—a Black God in His exterior and a Blackguard in His interior—terms which ought to make even Him blush with shame and remorse.

Andal has a place with God and also with His devotees. As the composer of devotional lyrics she is reckoned as one of the Alwars. She is also one of the consorts of the Lord,—a Nachiyar. By the garland of flowers she wore on her person before she offered them to Him, she is a Consort of Divinity. By the garland of verses which she has so exquisitely woven and placed at His Feet, she has the pride of place among His devotees. So Poomalai (flower garland) and Pamalai (verse garland) are her two-fold offerings and indicate her two-fold capacity. This is in a way implicit in her name. In Sanskrit the word *Goda* indicates excellence in speech or words. The same word in Tamil, *Kodhai*, 'கோதை', means and stands

for a garland of flowers. So in her very name lurks the essence of her greatness, the supplier of poomalai (பூமாலை) and paamalai (பாமாலை). She is a blend of two cultures,—Sanskrit and Tamil. And her name is indicative, by its Sanskrit and Tamil versions, of the Ubhaya Vedanta system of which she is such an admirable exponent.

Like St. Bernard of Burgundy, and St. Teresa of Spain, Goda also is an apostle of the cult of Bridal Mysticism. All the three of them employ the imagery of spiritual marriage to express the fervent devotion of their hearts to God. There is no element in their language of animality or sensuousness. To read and reflect on Andal's Tamil songs is the surest way of purging our minds of base and lovely thoughts, and a certain recipe for realising here and now the true bliss of union with our souls' other—God.



TONDARADIPPODI ALWAR.

"I was a cheat; I was a thief. My associates were all drawn from the scum of society; and I was wallowing in sin, a willing slave to fish-eyed damsels;—even to such a one like me came relief and redemption. The Beautiful One, who rescued me by lifting me up from that state, entered into my heart, and became (thenceforth) the object of my love and adoration, resides in Arangam (Srirangam)". This is the autobiography of one who was known as Vipranarayana in earlier life, and acquired the name of Tondaradippodi Alwar in later life after having entered the fold of the true devotees of God.

He was born in Tirumandangudi, in Tanjore District in a Brahmin family under the star Jyeshtha (Kettai) in the month of Margali. Though he started life by rearing a Nandavanam or flower garden for supplying flowers and Tulasi to the Lord of Srirangam (to which place he had migrated) it appears that he very soon became a victim to the wiles of a Devadasi (courtesan) by name Deva Devi, and like Viswamitra, fell from the path of rectitude into an abyss of shame and sin, and lived with her for a long time forgetting everything. But the grace and mercy of the God to whom he had owed allegiance earlier, did not forsake him, with the result that he was very soon weaned from his evil ways, and became a true devotee, cleansed of all evil and vice.

His is thus another story of a sinner turned saint. Like Bilwamangal of Northern India, and Vemanna of Andhra Desa, Vipranarayana also, after redemption, began to pour out his heart in verse; he became an Alwar. A convert can always be trusted to put more fervour and sincerity in his newly-acquired faith, and to exhibit greater and more intense devotion towards his Redeemer than the placid puritan, in whose case rectitude and religion are taken for granted. "Krishna

Karnamrita" in Sanskrit, Vemanna's "Padyams" in Telugu, and "Tirumaalai" in Tamil have been regaling generations of godly men and women with all that is highest in philosophical thought, moral endeavour and religious experience.

How deeply attached this Alwar became towards Lord Sri Ranganatha can be seen from the fact that he would not even once mention the God of any other Divya Desa in all his 55 Pasurams. Even Tiruppanalwar, who has to his credit only 10 Pasurams in all, has referred to Lord Srinivasa of Tirumalai (Tirupati) twice in the course of those 10 stanzas. But to Tondaradippodigal, Ranganatha was everything, and there was no place left in his devoted heart for the same God residing elsewhere. This Alwar has sung two poems or Prabandhams, and they are "Tirumaalai" of 45 verses, and Tiruppalli-Ezhuchi of 10 verses.

There was a time within living memory when the sweet, simple, and impassioned songs of "Tirumaalai" were on every Vaishnavite's lips in Tamil Nad, and probably more ladies knew these songs by heart than men. These songs make a direct appeal to the heart. To recite them or even to hear them recited, invariably means being moved to the depth of one's soul. There is no attempt made in the songs to elucidate high philosophy as in the case of Nammalwar, or to indulge in high-flown language as in the case of Tirumangai Alwar. Though, in the opening verse, the Alwar starts by saying that he has kept his senses under control, in the later verses he refers very often to the time when he was the slave of his senses, and appeals to the Lord for help and succour.

We, modern men and women, who have learnt, or are being taught, that we need not follow the Sastras, but can follow our own inclinations, are sure to derive very great spiritual profit and mental comfort by studying these verses of "Tirumalai". "I have cast

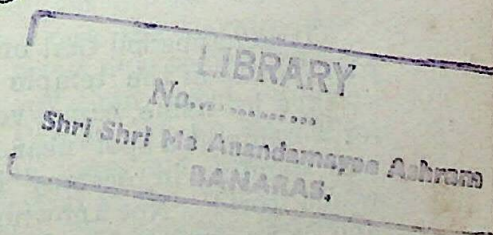
truth to the winds", says the Alwar in verse No. 33. "I have got entangled with females with beautiful hair. In me is deeply imbedded all untruth and falsity. And yet I have dared to come and stand before Thee. My Sire! Oh Aranga! Induced by the desire to secure Thy mercy, and in the hope that I shall be the recipient of it, this liar comes and stands before Thee,—a liar, alas, once, twice, thrice." And, again in Pasuram 26: "I am not given to worship you with choice flowers, morning, noon and evening; I am not accustomed to speak of your auspicious qualities in faultless words; nor is my heart imbued with feelings of love towards Thee. Therefore, I have nothing. I am nothing to Thee. Oh, why was I born!" It is impossible to read "Tirumaalai," without sharing with its author a fraction at least of the great emotion and the deep fervour that moved him to sing in such a strain.

To the sophisticated temple-goer and the pseudo-religionist, he has a fine sentiment to offer. He tells them that he once tried to deceive the Lord by masquerading as a true devotee; but, when he remembered that the person sought to be cheated was not one outside him but one who dwelt in his heart and took note of his thoughts, even as they arose in him, he realised what a fool he had been, and laughed outright at his own stupidity in trying to deceive such a one.

If Tirumalai touches the heights of religious fervour, the Alwar's other work reaches the heights of pastoral poetry. It is called "Tiruppalli Ezhuchi," praying to the Lord to get up from bed. The symptoms of dawn are being described in this poem of only ten verses in such a vivid manner that even as one reads it one can see the glory of the dawn, hear the sweet sounds of the chirping of birds, and smell the morning fragrance of the blossoming flowers fondly opening their buds to the caressing kisses of the

golden rays of the rising sun. "The lotus flowers have spread out their petals in full bloom. The sun has emerged from the ever-sounding sea and stands above it, as if he grew out of it. Even the ladies with slender waists have finished their baths (in the river Cauvery) and reached the shore, after shaking off the water from their lovely locks. Pray, get up, Oh Lord of Aranga-maa-nagar!"

The name borne by this Alvar, Tondar-Adi-Podi, the dust of the feet of true devotees, is really a title which he longed to have conferred on him, as is clear from the closing verse of this, his second and last poem. It looks as if he sang all his 55 verses only to obtain this boon from the Lord,—to be made the servant of His Bhaktas.



TIRUPPANALWAR.

The conjunction of the moon with the star Rohini in the Tamil (Solar) month of Karthigai marks the birthday of the great Sri Vaishnavite Saint and devotee, Tiruppanalwar. Tradition has it that, as a baby he was found and brought up by a member of the Panar caste living on the southern bank of the Cauvery, opposite the famous shrine of Srirangam, in what is now known as Woraiyur. The vocation of the members of that caste appears to have been the making and/or the playing on a musical veena-like instrument called "Pan", and the caste seems to have derived its name from it.

This saint spent his life in singing the praises of God. His heart yearned for a vision of the Lord at Srirangam. But he felt hampered by the caste attributed to him. His devotion and reverence were of such of stamp that he felt that it would be a sacrilege for him even to cross the Cauvery and step into Srirangam. So, his "Pan" in hand, he used to stand on the southern bank of the Cauvery and sing the praises of the Lord who must have vouchsafed to him His beatific vision to his mental eyes. The saint not infrequently used to get into a trance.

It so happened that on a particular day a priest or *paricharaka* of the temple of Sri Ranganatha, Lokasaranga by name, came, vessel in hand, to take water for worship at a spot near where this great devotee was standing in ecstasy forgetting himself and the whole world. Not knowing that he was in a trance and being anxious to take water and get back to the temple early, Lokasaranga cried out to the devotee to take himself away; and finding that he did not move, he took a pebble and flung it at him. That pebble struck Panar in the face, and coming to his senses he betook himself to a distance, apologising for his conduct.

The priest had forgotten the incident by the time he reached the temple with his vessel full of the sacred water of the Cauvery. But he was violently reminded of it when he entered the *sanctum sanctorum*. As soon as he stepped in, he found blood trickling down the face of that beautiful reclining Lord. Alarmed and dismayed at this, and surmising rightly that it was his *apachara* (wrong act) towards Panar that was responsible for this divine displeasure, the poor priest fell prostrate at the feet of the Lord, and implored His forgiveness for what he now realised was a very serious offence. That night in his dream the Lord appeared before him and prescribed the expiation for that sin. "Repair as soon as the morning dawns to the spotless saint on the southern bank and implore his forgiveness. He is a very true devotee of Mine. In regard to sins of commission and omission towards My devotees, the power to pardon is in them, and not in Me. Tell him it is My desire and My command that he come to Me here. Go, bring, and, if need be, carry him unto Me."

The priest could not sleep thereafter. His soul rejoiced that an opportunity had been furnished to him to purge himself of his heinous crime. The day dawned and the priest ran to where the devotee was singing out his soul. The priest now waited till the devotee got out of his trance and then came forward saying "Oh! Great Soul! Pardon me for my cruel act of yesterday towards your pure and noble self. I have come here by the command of Sri Ranganatha to take you to His Presence". The selfless devotee drew back protesting, "Who am I to pardon you and how can I, a lowborn, set foot on sacred Srirangam, the Divine Island where Apavarga or Moksha is strewn about like grain in the fields, for Mumukshus to gather"? Lokasaranga rejoined, "Forget not Oh!

knowing one! that the same Lord who created caste has issued the command that you be brought to His presence. Pray permit me to carry you on my shoulders so that He may have you as He desires, and you may not transgress the limitations and restrictions you have imposed upon yourself." Unsophisticated and simple-hearted Panar obeyed the words of the priest and closing his eyes and clasping his hands together (in anjali) he allowed himself to be carried to the shrine on the shoulders of Lokasaranga.

The whole town of Srirangam, learning of this, came to greet them, and followed them into the shrine. Inside the *sanctum sanctorum* Lokasaranga requested the Saint to descend from his shoulder and see for himself. The devotee only then opened his eyes. From foot to head (aa-paada-choodam) his eyes, bewitched as they were by the glory of the Lord's form, travelled slowly, drinking deeply from that fountain of Beauty and Grace. And when he had finished gazing, the Lord gathered him unto Himself. The erstwhi'e Panar became one with the Lord he so deeply loved. The individual soul was lost and wrapped up in the All-Soul. Panar became Tirup-panalwar and later Pan Perumal.

The Prabandham sung by this Alwar is the shortest Prabandham among the 24 that go to make up the 4,000 Divya Prabandham. It consists only of 10 pasurams. The name that has been given to this Prabandham is "Amalanadipiran," which is really not a name, but the opening words of his Prabandham. This work of this Alwar is included in the Mudalayiram, (first thousand) and is being recited daily in temples as part of what is called Nityanusandhanam (daily recitations). Though short in length, this work is of the greatest import and importance in the matter of Siddhanta. As Sri Vedanta Desika has put it, it is the seed from which has sprouted all the elaborations of Vedic scholars in

regard to Siddhanta and Sampradaya. The first letters of the first three stanzas go to make up the sacred Pranava. Later Vaishnavite Acharyas have seen very many beauties of thought and expression in these 10 stanzas of Tiruppanalwar. For an appreciative description of beauty in the Archa form of the Lord this prabandha has no equal. All the other qualities or Gunas of God are really derived or inferred from that beauty, and enjoyed as adjuncts to that beauty.

Like Nandanar among the Saivites, Tiruppanalwar stands out among the Sri Vaishnavites as a challenge to the theory that caste controls spiritual eminence. His devotion-inspired songs are nurturing generations of Vaishnavites in true God-love and take them along the safe and sure path towards the attainment of spiritual glory.



TIRUMANGAI AZHWAR.

At a small beautiful village called Kurayalur near Tiruvali Tirunagari about six miles from Sirkali (Old Shiyali) in Tanjore District, Tirumangai Azhwar was born under the constellation Karthigai in the Tamil month of Karthigai (November—December). He was the last of the Azhwars.

Being nearest in point of time to us, this Azhwar's life-history as handed down by tradition, and his songs, reflect our modern mentality and ways of life in a much larger degree than those of the earlier Azhwars. It is said that to marry a highly cultured and handsome lady, Kumudavalli by name, this Azhwar took a vow to feed hundreds of Vishnu Bhaktas every day, and when all his wealth was exhausted, he took to relieving the rich and the unwary of the burden of their riches. In the course of way-laying innocent travellers and depriving them of their possessions, he had to deal one night with God Himself who had willed to bless him for his acts of service and devotion, though the means employed were unrighteous. It is said that Lord and Sri disguised as a newly wedded couple passed by, wearing jewels of great value. Neelan, as the Azhwar was then known, with his band of dacoits, stopped Them and ordered Them to surrender to him all Their jewels. They both meekly did so; but a *noopura*, (an ornament that adorns the feet) of the Lord would not easily come off. Neelan stooped and bit off the jewel's joint, and in the act his head came into contact with God's Feet—a contact for which the whole of the devout world hankers. When he wanted to lift up the bundled ornaments and walk away, he found he could not lift them. Suspecting that the plundered way-farer had uttered some mantra, Neelan flourished his dagger, and at the point of it wanted Him to disclose that mantra to him. And the Lord did so. *Sparsa* of, or contact with, His Feet yielded imme-

diate fruit. The Lord gave *upadesa* of the Ashtakshara, that mantra of mantras which makes light work of the heaviest load of human sins. And Neelan broke into rapturous verse and became an Azhwar.

He was a chieftain or Poligar under the Chola King and hence is referred to as a 'Mannan' or King. Tirumangai being the name of his capital he is known as Tirumangai Mannan. His prowess in war is spoken of by him in several stanzas of his works. But it is his power of wielding the pen and of writing forceful and impassioned Tamil Poetry that counts for us. Starting with that famous stanza beginning with the words "Vaadinen—Vaadi—Varundinen Manaththaal" (withered in spirit and pained in mind) and ending in the exultation born of having realised the greatness and efficacy of the name Narayana, the Azhwar has sung 1253 *pasurams* or verses which go to make up six Prabandhas (separate works). It has been said that they constitute, as it were, the six vedangas for the four vedas sung by Nammazhwar. The first of the six known as Periya Tirumozhi consists of 1084 *pasurams* and deals extensively with the enjoyment of the Archa (image) forms of the Lord in several sacred spots, from Badri in the north to Tirukkurungudi in the south. Two shrines, those of Nachiarkoil and Tirukkannapuram, have 100 *pasurams* each at a stretch sung in their praise. Several others have far less, but quite a considerable number, sung in their praise. In all, this Azhwar has sung about 86 out of the total of 108 Divya Desas. His other works are Tirukkuruntadagam Tiruneduntadagam, Tiruvezhu—Koottirukkai, Siriya (Small) Tirumadal, and Periya (Big) Tirumadal.

It has been rightly pointed out and emphasised by later Acharyas that the songs of this Azhwar, more than those of other Azhwars, are particularly calculated to inculcate and enhance the enjoyment of the Archa forms of the Lord in the temples. A notion is

very widely prevalent that image worship is only a step, an aid to concentration on the Divine, and that we must rise beyond the state and stage of idol worship. The works of this Azhwar give the lie direct to this way of thinking, by equating the idol with God; it is not merely God's body. If the Bhagavat Sastras (otherwise known as Pancharatra) lay down anything, they say this; that the Lord has or assumes five different forms. Para-roopa (in Vaikunta) Vyuha-roopa (in Ksheerabdi etc.) Antaryami-roopa (in the hearts of everyone), Vibhava-roopa (when He comes down as an Avatar, such as Rama or Krishna) and Archa-roopa (Images), and that in each of the Roopas He manifests Himself in full, and that there is no gradation among them, one leading to another. It was left to Tirumangai Azhwar to prove to the world how absolutely true is this great siddhanta, and how it is possible to get out of Archa here and in this world, the same bliss that the celestials in Vaikunta are said to obtain from the Para-roopa,—that form beyond human ken. In fact just as the materialist of to-day scoffs at the devotee, the Azhwar reminds those who yearn for the bliss of Parmapada, about the trite and homely saying that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. "Why do you all" he asks, "give up the hare in your hand and go after the crow?" In the two *madals* he posits that out of the Purushartas,—Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha,—Kama alone is the true purushartha that a knowing man ought to desire for; he even makes fun of the states attained by the votaries of the other three Purusharthas. The hankering of the modern mind to fulfil itself here and now, without waiting to go to regions beyond and in times to come, is very well reflected in the works of this Azhwar. Like most of us with a craze for speed, he does not like to wait for spiritual satisfaction. By a sleight of hand, as it were, the Azhwar diverts the rushing forces of his Kama (or desire) Godward, and thereby sublimates that Kama or desire into Bhakti or

Devotion. He calls out to his fellow-beings not to starve their senses or go to the forest and do rigid tapas amidst the five fires. "Fulfil your love, quench your passion, by communion with the Beautiful and Merciful Gods who reside in Temples with no other purpose in view than to mix freely with the devotees who seek Him there"—is his clarion call. To explain himself the Azhwar uses expressions which savour of erotism, but he does so only after uttering a strict warning that every one should thoroughly cast off sex and lust. Melted in the crucible of the Azhwar's ecstatic emotion towards God, lust and other base desires lose their sting and get alchemised into pure Bhakthi or Devotion, and words taken from sexual vocabulary are cleansed of the dirt that attach to sex and get ennobled into pure and serene invocations and incantations.

One Upanishad blames the Creator for having constituted all the senses or Indhriyas in such a way as to go out and enjoy outside things. It is only one in a million, it says, that has the courage to turn his sight inward and allow his senses to feed on Him who resides there. As opposed to it, this Azhwar asks the Lord "Why do You get into my heart and lurk there like a thief? Come out and let me see Your beautiful body with my eyes which are longing to have a vision of You." That in a nutshell describes the outlook of this Azhwar who has all our materialistic tendencies, but diverts them unerringly towards the Form and Body of God. He has for that reason been called a Charvaka in regard to God-head. We deny our own souls and affirm our own bodies; Azhwar is willing to deny the spirit or swaroopa of God in his great passion for the Roopa or Body of God.

These and several other excellent lessons in the philosophy of religion are there in the works of this Azhwar. But by far the greatest contribution to divine enjoyment made by this exceedingly human

Azhwar is the literary approach to God and Religion. He is a great Tamil scholar இரும் தமிழ் நூல் புலவன். He is a master of all the four types of poetry in Tamil Asu (sudden) Vistara (elaborate) Madura (sweet) and Chitra (artistic), and is therefore known Nalu-Kavippperumal நாலுகவிப் பெருமாள். The words he uses, and the metres he chooses, lend themselves to such symphony and sweetness that to recite or sing his verses is tantamount to Bhagavad-anubhava or enjoyment of God. He himself says to God "By song you showed to me that you are inside my heart." The Alwar's songs really show Him to us. The alliteration, the balance and the sound-sense appropriateness, all make for exquisite poetry that captures the ear and ravishes the soul.

The aesthetic perfection and the captivating beauty of the Azhwar's *archa* form in his birth-place are equalled only by the ecstatic outpourings of his love-laden heart in the shape of rapturous verse. Thousands of his devotees votaries and admirers revel in feasting their eyes on the ethereal beauty of form and face, and regale their souls with the recitation of the soul-stirring songs, of this great Azhwar who has shown to us that the path towards God lies not through penance or self-mortification, but in literature and love.



PART II
MYSTICISM

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MYSTICISM

TIRUPPAVAI.

The Tamil month of Margazhi (Decemeber-January) is sacred to Krishna-Bhaktas for a two-fold reason. Lord Sri Krishna from His seat in the chariot of Arjuna has declared that of all the months in the year, He is the month of Margazhi. Added to that comes the glory arising out of the close affinity that has developed for the last several centuries between Tiruppavai and this Margazhi month. It is quite in the fitness of things that the sweet-heart of Krishna, Goda, should be identified with the month so dear to Sri Krishna Himself. As far as history and tradition go, the study and the enjoyment of Tiruppavai date back to the great Ramanuja himself. He was called, and he must have been proud to be so called. 'Tiruppavai Jeeyar'. For the last several centuries Sri Vaishnavites have always referred to the days of this month only by the particular Tiruppavai verse of the day, and not by the dates. The 30 stanzas of Tiruppavai are sung every morning long before sunrise. In addition, the first stanza on the first day, the second on the second day, and so on, is regarded as the day's pasuram பாசரம் or song, so much so, a habit has come about to date letters and other documents not by mentioning the date but by mentioning the first word of the day's pasuram.

Tiru-p-pavai திருப் பாவை means a sacred Girl, a Divine girl, and therefore, is capable of indicating Andai Herself. Her work is also a 'Tiruppavai'. It is so called because it relates to the observance of a Pavai or Nonbu,—*Vratam* in Sanskrit. In fact all the verses excepting the 20th end with 'Elorempavai' the 30th alone ending with the words 'Empavai' *simpliciter*. One of the several meanings attributed to this refrain is based upon the meaning 'Nonbu' for the word 'Pavai'. Pavai means a girl. Pavai may also be the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word 'Bhava'. It may,

in fact, mean several other things with which it is not proposed to dwell here.

This work 'Tfruppavai' has its genesis in the Krishna-Prema of Andal. Having learnt to love Sri Krishna from Her child-hood, nay baby-hood, Her Krishna-prema grew in volume and intensity as She grew up. The course of love is never smooth. In the course, therefore, of Her yearning for Krishna Samslesha, Goda had to live through several moments of depression and anguish at the thought that He did not respond. During those periods of depression, Her father, the great Vishnu-Chitta, (Periyalwar) used to give Her words of advice and encouragement by relating to Her several episodes from Srimad Bhagavata. One of such episodes is the Katyayani-Vrata-anushtanam (the observance of the Katyayani vrata) resorted to by the Gopis in order to get rain for the country and to obtain their hearts' desire, Krishna Samslesha (enjoyment). Goda, who listened to this episode with rapt attention, immediately made up Her mind to follow that method. Her poetic soul helped Her to convert Herself into a Gopi. Her place Sri Villiputtur into Gokula, the temple of the Presiding Deity Vata-Patra-Sayi, into the mansion of Nanda-gopa, the cowherd-chieftain, and Vata-Patra-Sayi Himself into Sri Krishna. She looked upon her playmates as Gopi damsels, pining for Krishna, like Herself. With this setting, and with this mentality, She starts singing 'Tiruppavai'. The idea is that for this Nonbu, the Leader, Sri Krishna, has got to be roused from bed by all the girls repairing to His mansion very early in the morning, and with His help they are to go and bathe in the cool waters of the Jumna.

The first five pasurams of Tiruppavai are by way of introduction and speak about what happened in the early part of the night, in the later part of which they are all to go to Sri Krishna to solicit His help for the

observance of the Nonbu. The first stanza is the clarion call which this Divine Damsel of Dravida-nad sends out not only to those who were blessed to be Her playmates but to all willing humanity ever since that date. She calls forth கிரடப் போதுவீர் போதுமினே Those who are desirous of having a dip into divinity! come forth. That is the only condition she imposes,—a desire for God. In the next stanza She enumerates the rigours of the Nonbu, which include abstinence from fatty food and from decorating one's self, and other features usually associated with a religious observance. She then relates the lasting and imperishable benefits that will accrue to one and all by the observance of the Nonbu. She invokes the God of rain in the 4th Pasuram, and by the 5th She gives a wonderful twist to this Nonbu, by mentioning to Her listeners that, if Sri Krishna is worshipped by all the Karanas (faculties) Manas, Vak, and Kaya, the age-long sins will get burnt like cotton in the fire.

All the Gopis of Andal's imagination are supposed to have then returned to their houses, it being understood that very early in the morning, they are all to meet at the trysting place,—'Pavaikkalam'. It is difficult to say that any of the girls would have slept, but one could rest assured that Andal did not sleep. She gets up from her sleepless bed very early in the morning and goes from house to house waking up girls who are still asleep or at least have not left their beds. Pasurams 6 to 15 are in this strain. How I wish I had the power to depict the beauty of the wonderful words employed by Andal in these Pasurams—now coaxing, now threatening, now teasing, and ever and anon reminding the addressee of the Krishna-Samslesha that is awaiting her on getting up,—in language that can do at least some justice to their freshness and beauty! Several of the Azhwars have sung 'Tiruppalli Ezhuchi' or rousing-from-sleep-songs to the Lord. Andal Herself does so later in this poem. But She stands unique in having sung ten wonderful, nay

marvellous, stanzas addressed to the devotees of the Lord and intended to wake them up from their sleep, lethargy, laziness, or what you will. As one reads these ten stanzas, one feels transported into an atmosphere of simple unsophisticated village life with all its sounds, scents and sights. Here indeed is a pastoral poem *par excellence*.

Having gathered together all the girls of the village, Andal imagines Herself as going in their company to the mansion of Nandagopala. The 16th pasuram is a knock at the gate, and a request to the gate-keeper to allow the young girls to enter the house so that they may mention their hearts' desire to the Lord, Who is sleeping there with His Consort Nappinnai. Having obtained entrance into the house they then sing to rouse from sleep Nandagopala, Yasoda, Krishna and Balarama in the 17th stanza. But there is no response from Him. An idea then strikes them that they have proceeded on wrong lines by appealing straight to Krishna without first praying to His Consort, and annexing Her aid. The 18th verse, therefore, invokes Her grace. The 19th and 20th stanzas are stanzas in which they appeal to the Lord and to Sri by devoting half a verse to each. By the 21st and 22nd stanzas, they make known to the Lord that they have come to him cleansed of their Ahankara and Mamakara, feelings of I and mine. Touched by this moving appeal, the Lord bestirs Himself; Andal then prays to Him in the 23rd verse to come like a lion out of its cave, with majestic steps, and to seat Himself on the throne, so that they may present to Him their humble petition of prayer. And as He starts walking to fulfil this desire of Andal, Andal as the true daughter of Vishnu-Chitta the author of the *Pallandu*, and as one who had imbibed in full the same love and the consequent fear for the safety of God, bursts out into a *Pallandu*. She forgets the petition she has come to present. She forgets her smallness. She forgets all else. She remembers

only that the Lord is coming walking. and, afraid that those soft and lovely feet may get hurt, She sings Pallandu for those Feet. By the next pasuram, (25) She addresses Him and tells Him how She and Her friends have come to Him to get their pain, trouble and sorrow dispelled, and to obtain everlasting joy by His grace. Not forgetting the pretext of the Nonbu or Vrata, in the next verse (26), She prays to Him to give to, and confer on, them all the necessary requisites for the observance of that Nonbu. She tells Him in the next, the 27th verse, that all the benefits of the world obtainable by a man or woman will be theirs, as soon as He deigns to be with them and of them. In the very sweet and enchanting stanza that follows (28), She talks of Her lowliness and His greatness and apologises to Him for having used, out of love or ignorance, terms not very respectful or respectable in relation to Him. The 29th stanza is the pivot of this wonderful poem. In it, the prayer goes forth that She may be granted the great boon of ever serving Him, and She requests Him to convert all desires and passions She is capable of, into God-desire and godly passion. The 30th and last stanza is the phalasruti, and says, in words which cannot be excelled in sweetness or auspiciousness, that those who memorise these thirty stanzas and repeat them will obtain all the boons and all the pleasures that are the gift of the ever dear Lord with the lotus eyes.

This is the purport of the poem; but the words employed by the great artist Andal unfold to the reader, in a language all Her own, the greatest secrets of Vedantic religion. This is known as Swapadesartha, or esoteric meaning, for excellence in which this poem is specially noted.



DRAMIDOPANISHAD SARAM.

I

INTRODUCTORY.

Saint Satakopa, the divine bard of Alwar Tirunagari in Tirunelveli District in the Madras State, was a great seer and saint. It is said of him that from his very birth he was immersed in samadhi (God-contemplation). Four works are ascribed to him. They are, in the order in which they were sung, Tiruviruttam. Tiruvasiriyam, Peria Tiruvandadi and Tiruvoimozhi. The quintessence of the philosophy of the Visishtadvaita School of Vedantic thought, and the chief tenets of the Sri-Vaishnava Siddhanta are to be found in his works, especially in the last of them, Tiruvoimozhi, which is justly famous for its philosophical and religious excellence. The claim has been made with great appropriateness and justification that Ramanuja the propounder of the Vishishtadvaitic method of interpreting the Vedanta Sutras largely drew inspiration from the intuitive experiences and mystic utterances of this great sage and poet, Satakopa. Sri Ramanuja himself has not referred to the Saint or his works by name. Nevertheless one can safely assert that it was due to the availability of Satakopa's works to Ramanuja, and the non-availability thereof to other Bhashyakaras or commentators, that Ramanuja alone was able so beautifully and perfectly to synthesise the various seemingly conflicting texts of the Srutis, especially the bheda-srutis and the abheda-srutis and to wind up each one of his commentaries on the Vedanta Sutras with the very significant words *Iti Sarvam Samanjasam* or "Thus everything has been reconciled". It is not as if the so-called Ghatakasrutis were not always there for any commentator to see, but Sri Ramanuja's special attention was called to their existence by Sri Satakopa having, at the very commencement of his Tiruvoimozhi, sung about God permeating everything even as the soul

permeates the body. "*Udalmisai Uyir Ena*" உடல் மிசை உயிர் என aptly summarises the idea of the *ghataka sruti* starting with the words "*Yah prithiviam tishtan*". It is a pithy statement in Tamil of the sentiment which the Sruti seeks to explain in a very long and involved manner. The Azhwar had intuited the *sareeri-sareera-bhava* of God and the world, and the consequent organic unity of God on the one hand, and of the world of sentient beings and non-sentient matter, on the other. He had enjoyed God as the soul within the body; and as the ghee within the fresh-drawn milk. Sri Ramanuja had mastered this series of songs and they left no doubt in his mind about the relationship of God with man or God with matter. Nammazhvar (the Tamil name for Satakopa) had revelled in the idea of the entire world being His Vibhuti, not in the Bhagavad-Gita method of one asserting that it is so and the other taking it to be so, but in a manner that made him think of the world in terms of God; thus, this earth is Vamana's earth; the sea is *Pirankidakkum kadal* (பிரான் கிடக்கும் கடல்), the place where He reclines; the cattle are the cattle that He, Lord Krishna, had grazed; and so on and so forth. And again the Azhwar has enjoyed and experienced, and thereby interpreted, the text Tatvamasi, which Advaita Vedantins are never tired of referring to, and which furnishes the basis for their Aham-Brahmasmi conception,—not in the philosopher's analytical and polemical way, but by feeling and talking as if he was himself God. In the Tiruvoimozhi starting with Kadal-jnalam (V. 5) Nammalwar says that he it was that created the world, that he was himself the whole world, and so on. We have heard it said that Vamadeva and Prahlada had the true Brahmadrshhti or God-vision. But here are the outpourings of a mere man, more historic than either of them, and they show to us how to a true Vedantin, man and God are not two distinct factors though they may be two separate entities. They are not different in connotation, but only in

denotation. That is the same thing which is referred to as *avinabhava* or *aprthak-siddha-viseshana* in the terse language of the Sri Bhashya. This is the system evolved by Sri Ramanuja, and no wonder that knowing people say that Sri Ramanuja had his great ideas as much from the Tamil Upanishad of Nammazhvar, Dramidopanishad, as from the ancient Upanishads that were known to all the commentators.

The name Dramidopanishad as referring to the Tiruvoimozhi of Nammazhvar has been immortalised by Sri Vedanta Desika, the illustrious follower of Ramanuja. Two works of his, named Dramidopanishad-Saram and Dramidopanishad-Tatparya-Ratnavali, give to the Sanskrit-knowing world all the essential teachings of the Tamil Saint, Satakopa. With that great philosophical dexterity and command of language for which Vedanta Desika is famous (he was known as *Kavitarkika Kesari* even during his life-time) Desika has established the supremacy of Tamil as a language, and demonstrated that it is in no sense inferior to Sanskrit—the Deva Bhasha—and has crowned the Tamil verses of Satakopa as the Empress (*Sarvabhaumi*) of religious literature. It is not within the scope of this series of articles to enjoy the beauties of “Dramidopanishad Saram” and “Dramidopanished-Tatparya-Ratnavali” which by themselves are a rich storehouse of beautiful poetry, sublime philosophy, and intense devotion.

Some of the names by which Vedanta Desika refers to Nammazhvar's works,—especially the Tiruvoimozhi,—are “*Sarvachita Upanishad*”. “*Satamathana-Munes-samhita*” and “*Sarveeya Sakha*” indicating thereby that the place properly ascribable to them is the same as, if not higher than, that of the ancient Upanishads. Even the most sceptic and conservative of Sanskritists cannot help realising and appreciating the value and worth of Satakopa's Tamil hymns if he peruses the Saram and Tatparya Ratna-

vali above referred to. For this signal service of thus synthesising the Sanskrit Vedas and the Tamil Vedas Vedanta Desika earned the title "Ubhaya-Vedanta-Acharya" from Lord Sri Ranganatha Himself,—the presiding Deity of Srirangam.

In this series of articles it is proposed to dwell on some aspects of the mystic experience of Nammazhvar, and incidentally of the other Azhvars also. The 4000 'Tamil verses compendiously known as the "Divya Prabhanda" are the work of as many as 13 Saints. Madhurakavi and Tiru Arangathu Amudanar, out of them, have respectively sung about Satakopa and Ramanuja alone. All the rest have dived deep into the Divine Bliss of God-love, and their several works furnish several intricate details about the several phases of God-enjoyment. All of them are imbued with a divine fervour of a very high order, and they have produced religious poetry of a very impassioned nature. While it may be difficult to pick and choose from among these most ardent Bhaktas, one can safely assert that Nammazhvar stands apart from the rest of them in the matter of philosophical profundity and devotional fervour. One could almost say that seen against the background of his Visishtadvaitic *anubhava* or experience, the *God-anubhava* of the other Azhvars borders on Dvaitic enjoyment and experience. In Sampradayic language the term "*Bhagavad-Vishayam*" is used only for Nammazhvar's Tiruvoimozhi, and not to the other portions of the 4000, though they all, with the two exceptions noted above, deal only with Bhagavad-Vishaya or Divine Subject. Even to this day those who study the Siddhanta and Sampradaya of Sri Ramanuja-Darsana have to read Bhagavad Vishaya as part of their course of study under an acharya. There are several learned and valuable commentaries on Tiruvoimohi. The first of them was written by Tirukkurugai-Piran-Pillan, a direct disciple of Sri Ramanuja and

is known as Arayirappadi (consisting of 6000 granthas or units) and is replete with the language of the Sri Bhashya. To the followers of Ramanuja, Philosophy and Religion are not two separate or different departments of thought, but in the blending and synthesis of the two they seek and secure their spiritual realization.

II

GOD-HUNGER.

Bhakti or God-love is insisted upon by all schools of Vaishnavite thought as an essential pre-requisite for the flow of divine grace and therefore posited as a means for salvation. Vallabha, Chaitanya and all other great Vaishnava Acharyas have dwelt upon the need for this Bhakti or Prema towards God, and all those great Acharyas lived each a life of Divine love. So too, the Azhwars,—the divine bards of Tamil Nadu—have laid emphasis both by their lives and their sayings on God-love. Anbu (அன்பு), Asai (ஆசை), Bhakti (பக்தி), Kadal (காதல்) or Ava (அவா) for and towards God is the most noteworthy feature of their songs. In fact they take their generic name 'Azhvar' (one who gets immersed) from the fact of their being eternally immersed in God-love. While to the Advaitin God-love or Bhakti is only a means to the attainment of Gnana or true knowledge, to the Azhwars, and indeed to all Vaishnavite Acharyas, Bhakti is the *summum bonum* of religious experience. It is both the means and the end. It is an *Upaya* or means, since it is a sure method of obtaining Divine Grace. It is also a *Purushartha* or goal, since there is no higher state to be realised by man than to love God as an end in itself. Usually *Upaya* is difficult and hard, and not very sweet in the process. But here Bhakti as *Upaya* is indescribably sweet and pleasant. In fact before the practice of Bhakti even the pleasures of Paramapada pale into insignificance. Sadhana Bhakti itself is so sweet indeed that there is no desire to

think beyond it of Sadhya Bhakti. The sayings of several of the Azhwaras are to the effect that the attainment of Vaikunta is not to be preferred to the enjoyment obtainable here by loving Him and singing about Him.

While this amount of God-love is seen in every Azhwar, Nammazhwar's God-love is on a level far more exalted and far more intense. It is more an organic craving than a mere mental feeling. It is a consuming passion. Nammazhwar's songs of anguish, and his songs of rhapsody, both have their origin in this passion for God. While all devotees of God long mentally for communion with God, Nammazhwar pants for that communion with every pore and cell of his body and with every beat of his heart. There is a wonderful Tiruvoimozhi (III-8) starting with the words 'Mudiyane' (முடியானே) in which we see the hunger and craving not only of the Azhwar but of every one of his senses and faculties for God-realisation. His mind, his mouth, his hands, his eyes and his ears,—each faculty vies with the other in throbbing for consummation and fruition in the matter of God-enjoyment. And one very note-worthy feature of this very peculiar state is that each faculty is anxious to obtain realisation not only in the manner legitimately obtainable by it, but by exceeding and transcending even its functional limitations. Thus the hands want to praise Him with lofty words, the eyes want to worship Him with flowers, the ears want to see Him and so on, in addition of course to respectively worshipping, seeing, hearing etc. in the exercise of their respective legitimate functions. A very extraordinary state of mind indeed! This extra-sensuous desire of each sense in the matter of enjoying God does not appear to have been given expression to by any one else, Nammazhwar appears to justify such a longing on his part by the way God Himself sports by talking with His eyes, and by looking or seeing through the melodious tunes of His flute. (Thiruvoimozhi IX-ix-9). The

mystic realisation of Nammazhwar—this is but a single instance of it—really baffles comprehension and classification. This super-sensuous and organic love and infatuation towards God is the hall-mark of Nammazhwar's works. He makes no secret of it. He avowedly attempts to attain, and ultimately attains, God only through love. He calls it *Matinalam* மதிலம் in the very first stanza of his Tiruvoimozhi (I-i-1) and Ramanuja translates it in his first sloka of Sri Bhashya into "*Semushee Bhaktiroopa*". '*Bhakti-roopapanna-Gnana*' has ever since become the Visishtadvaitin's recipe for God-attainment.

The Tamil word for love which is very frequently used by Nammazhwar is *Ava* (அவா). It signifies a craving and an intense craving at that. We can see this 'Ava' sprouting in the Azhwar's first work, Tiruviruttam (stanza 84). He says there that he longs to see Him with His hands adorned by the Golden Chakra and the white Sankha. In the next work, Tiruvasiriyam, this *Ava* begins to assault and outgrow the Azhwar. In the second stanza he tells us that his love for God melts his inner soul. That love, we see, begins to flow like a river in Peria Tiruvandadi (8). The word used here is '*Anbu*' (அன்பு). What flowed like a river becomes as big as the sea in Tiruvoimozhi (V-3-4). It next becomes bigger than the sea (VII-3-6), and almost immediately outgrows in magnitude the entire earth, the seven seas and even inexhaustible space (VII-3-8). God does not vouchsafe His full grace even now, and so the Azhwar whips up his love to even greater proportions. Having become big enough to envelop all matter, the entire Achetana Tatwa (the Moola-Prakriti)—Alwar's love begins to excel the next bigger Tatwa, the individual soul, the jeevatma. In (X-3-2) the Azhwar feels that his individual soul is too small to hold this divine love, and he says so:—"My yearning (வேட்கை is the word used here) is not any more containable in this, my soul, which has been penetrated and soaked over

with it." So the love outgrows the Azhwar and by degrees outgrows and envelops the Lord Himself. Not till He, the biggest Being (Brahma), is made small by the fast growing passion of the Azwar's God-love, does God deign to vouchsafe His love and grace unreservedly to the Azhwar. The great Mayin that He is, the Lord envelopes that love, which enveloped even His mighty and infinite self, and the Azhwar finds and realises that he has reached his goal. He sings in this very strain in the closing stanzas of his Tiruvoimozhi (X-x-10 and 11). In the last line of the tenth stanza he describes his Ava (அவா) as one which enveloped Him and outgrew Him. He the Lord outgrows and envelops that Ava (அவா) and thereby holds the Azhwar in His embrace.

The reader would have noticed how the growth of the Ava (அவா) has been a steady one, progressing from more to more as the works and the stanzas flow by. Tiruvoimozhi like the three other works of the Azhwar is an *Antadi*, a species of prosody in which the closing word of each stanza is the opening word of the next one. So all the verses of this Azhwar are available to us in the very order in which they were sung, and this enables us therefore to appreciate how it has been a growth of bhakti from more to more. The development of the Azhwar's God-love as seen in and through his works is something marvellous and unique in the history of Divine Love in any language or literature. That the love of a small child, sitting underneath a Tamarind tree in the Temple of Adinatha in Azhwar-Tirunagari, could assume supra-cosmic proportions and could even transcend Him, who as Trivikrama transcended everything and everybody, has been demonstrated by the songs sung by this super-mystic Satakopa. His God-Hunger was intense enough to consume that very God who was the object of his love. And it is because of such hunger and thirst for God evinced by the Azhwar that Parasara Bhatta has referred to him as the embodiment of

‘Krishna-Trishna Tatvam’. Lord Krishna is Iswara Tatwa: but a mere *chetana* is Krishna-Trishna Tatwa. And that chetana is Satakopa.

III

KRISHNA TRISHNA.

Rishim Jushamahe Krishna - Trishnaa - Tatvam - ivoditam!
Sahasrasaakham Yodraaksheet Dramideem - Brahmasambhitaam!!

This is Sri Parasara Bhatta's conception of Sri Satakopa, that he was the personification of Krishna-Trishna Tatva, the embodiment of the feeling of thirst for Sri Krishna. The traditional *guruparam-paras* ascribe to Satakopa a period so early as to be very close to, almost on the wake of, Lord Sri Krishna's avatara. The commentators on Satakopa's Tiruvoimozhi very often put down the Azhwar's intense longing for Sri Krishna to a feeling of frustration engendered by the thought that if he had only been born a week earlier he would have been blessed enough to worship the Lord in flesh and blood. Whatever that may be, nobody can fail to see the inordinate love that Satakopa evinces towards Krishnavatara. No other avatara of the Lord exercised such a fascination over the saint's mind. The very thought of the birth of the Lord, how He grew up and how He managed the Mahabharata war, melt his soul. So he says in his Tiruvoimozhi V. x. 1. It is difficult to translate the fervour underlying the simple words employed in the stanza. The incidents pertaining to Krishna's life assault his soul in all their freshness, and steadily melt and eat it away. "When O Lord, can I join you?" is how he finishes the pasuram. In the third stanza of that Tiruvoimozhi (V. x) the Azhwar thinks of the incidents relating to Pootana and Sakata, and then pictures to himself the fear exhibited by that sweet little Lord when Yasoda threatend to beat Him with a stick for having stolen ghee. That picture wherein the Divine Child is seen with His lotus eyes full of tears appears

to cast a spell on the Azhwar's soul, which again melts away into unprecedented love. The story goes that the trance that the Azhwar got into while singing this Tiruvoimozhi lasted for six months. No wonder: the language employed in the pasurams of this Tiruvoimozhi is enough to melt even our hard hearts. This trance was the second one which he is said to have got into. The first one was much earlier,—while singing the 23rd stanza of his wonderful work, the Tiruvoimozhi. In that stanza he seeks to demonstrate how easy of approach the Lord is to His devotees. At once, and as an instance of that *saulab-yam*, he conjures up before his mind's eye the vision of the Lord in bondage,—that great Lord sought after by Mahalakshmi tied to a mere mortar in a cow-herd's house, and that too as a punishment for the theft of butter! With the onrush of feeling engendered by thus contrasting the Consort of Sri with the cowed-down weeping child tied to a mortar, the Azhwar became speechless for six months, and got immersed in the inward enjoyment of the lapse of the High into the low, of the Eternal into the ephemeral. This again is a specimen of the Krishna-Trishna that this unique devotee of God symbolises in himself. Incidentally it bears out the truth of Vedanta Desika's beautiful reference in the Yadavabhudaya to the contemplation of the Lord's bondage leading to our obtaining freedom from bondage.

Satakopa's Krishna-love was thus of the trance level and not a mere casual or fleeting desire. That his works abound in references to Sri Krishna, His deeds and misdeeds, His gunas and His agunas, is but a corollary to the Azhwar's great Krishna-Bhakti. Everything good was set apart for his Kannan (Krishna).

References have already been made to Nammazhwar's talking of himself as God, saying that he it was that created the world and so on. It is noteworthy

that while in this mood, the only avatara of the Lord, that he imagines himself to be, is Krisbnavatara. In the sixth stanza of that Tiruvoimozhi (V.vi) Satakopa says "I was the one who lifted the Govardhan (hill). I it was that subdued the seven fiery bulls, I it was that grazed the calves of Gokula and protected the herds of cows; and I am the chief of the gopas". One will search in vain to find a reference to any other avatara being talked of in that strain.

Yet another instance which proves to us the special fascination that Lord Sri Krishna exercised over the Azhwar is furnished by the Tiruvoimozhi starting with the words '*minnidai-madavar*' (மின்னிடை மடவார்) (VI-i). *Pranāya-Rosha* or the anger born of love is one of the signs of intense love. It is but natural that the beloved should very often feel that the lover is not true to his words, and as a consequence should work herself up into a state of anger, intending to give the lover no quarter when next he comes to her. In that mood and frame of mind the lady who feels herself injured and hurt by the indifference of the lover imagines a contemplated assault in the course of which she will repulse her lover with angry words and stern mien. If there is one avatara of the Lord with whom any one can without fear adopt the language of assault and insult, it is Sri Krisbnavatara. No wonder then that this Azhwar, with his partiality towards Krishna, has couched his pasurams of pranaya rosha in the language of a neglected Gopi. In all literature, religious or secular, it is hard to find a parallel to the verses of this Tiruvoimozhi. Inordinate Krishna-Prema, coupled with a sense of injury born of a feeling of frustration, can be seen in almost every syllable of the words employed herein, which are all loaded with indescribably acute God-love. "Get out, you have no place here. Return to me my play-things you took away on the pretext of loving me. There are others who are blessed enough to bear and enjoy the sweet notes of your divine flute. But I

belong to a class born to pine away in loneliness, a loneliness during which your lotus eyes and sweet smiling lips perennially hover around me and cause me infinite distress. No. Please do not start giving excuses as is your wont. The days are gone when I implicitly believed you and your words. You can go and repeat them to those who do not yet know you. For goodness's sake, take yourself off. Your face and your eyes are our danger-signals of destruction. All the worlds by now know your infidelity. A fault is, I suppose, a fault by whomsoever it is committed. If you persist in standing here and holding converse with my parrot and other pets, do not blame me if my people drive you away with sticks. Oh! it looks to me as if I have been specially doomed eternally to pine away in grief at your indifference".

A few of the sentiments contained in those love-choked verses have been sought to be rendered into English above. The English rendering, however hardly does justice to the beauty of the sentiments expressed, or of the language employed, by the Azhwar. It behoves everyone to dive deep into the beauties of the original verses themselves, and see the depths of Krishna-prema vouchsafed to this premier Krishna Bhakta.

At times the Azhwar gets into an exultant mood and imagines himself as the specially favoured devotee. Such periods are rare, unlike the periods of depression which are numerous and more frequent. The one Tiruvoimozhi in which the Azhwar is seen to indulge in a feeling of elation (VI-iv) is bound up with Sri Krishna. Rather unusually with this Azhwar, who has specialised in weeping and in giving expression to his sense of *vislesha* (separation) and feeling of forlornness, this Tiruvoimozhi talks in the language of satisfaction and security. The Azhwar begins here by exclaiming that he has learnt day and

night to expatiate upon the inexplicable and inscrutable sporting of Lord Sri Krishna. All the worlds cannot be equal to him as he has learnt to spend his time in love, his mind revelling in the contemplation of the leelas (sports) of that sweet Flutist. All the pasurams of this Tiruvoimozhi run in this strain and show to us in what measure the heart of Nammazhwar was soaked with Krishna-love. This Tiruvoimozhi is in fact the only place where we see the thirst of the Azhwar for Sri Krishna quenched in a measure. In almost all the other references to Sri Krishna we see the Azhwar thirsting and throbbing, pulsating and palpitating for Sri Krishna-*samslesha* (union).

Parasara Bhatta who coined the epithet Krishna-trishna-tatva as appropriate to describe Nammazhwar was himself an ardent student of the Divya Prabhandam, with special reference, of course, to the Tiruvoimozhi. Coming from him therefore one has to attach much importance and significance to it. The attempt made herein is only to indicate briefly,—just as one points to the sea with the forefinger,—the lines on which each of us can enjoy the aptness of that phrase as applied to Nammazhwar. The Azhwar's love towards God is greater than all the seas as he himself described it in VII-iii-8. How can it be understood by us ordinary human beings wallowing in samsara with no hunger except for food or other edibles, and no thirst except for water or liquor? Hankerings of the flesh we have in plenty; hankering of the soul, none. By long and intimate association with the body and the senses, we have forgotten that there is a soul at all apart from the body,—much more, therefore, we have forgotten that the soul can want God as the body wants food, water and air. But to Nammazhwar Krishna was everything.—He was the food that he ate, the water that he drank, and the betel that he chewed (VI-vii-1). How then can we understand his Krishna-Trishna? Let us at least admire, even if we cannot emulate.

THE AZHWAR AND THE WORLD.

In the previous two articles we tried to understand somewhat the consuming God-hunger and the intense God-thirst of the Azhwar. Lest it should be thought that there was no place in the Azhwar's heart for his fellow-beings, it is necessary now and here to deal with the workings of the Azhwar's heart in regard to the world and its inhabitants. Here again the Azhwar occupies a pre-eminent place among God's devotees. For he alone out of them all starts singing for the redemption of all his fellowmen.

The first song with which he opened his lips is a humble appeal for mercy for the whole of mankind. Even like the Rishis of Dandaka who drew the attention of Sri Rama to the mutilated limbs of the sages of that place victimised by the Rakshasas "Ehi-pasya-sareerani", in order to enlist His sympathy and obtain His promise of redress, Nammazhwar draws the Lord's attention to the serious drawbacks and failings of humanity. He starts the Tiruviruttam, his first poem, with a *vinnappam* or petition. Freely rendered into English, that Pasuram runs somewhat in the following terms:

"O! You Lord of the Celestials! Who were born in all categories of living beings, (bird, beast, man etc.) in order to give succour to all life! Pray lend your ear truly to this humble petition of mine. May *We all* (entire mankind) never more wallow in this woeful state of false knowledge, wicked (or evil) conduct, and filthy body".

If this is the sentiment voiced by one who never talked a word since birth, when first he opened his lips, is it not a sure indication of the compassion residing in his heart for the whole of mankind? It must have been his uppermost thought drowning

probably even the God-love that had kept him speechless for years. If we compare the sentiments with which each of the numerous devotees of God, singing in one language or another, starts his or her work, it will furnish a wonderful study in the psychology of godly men. This is not the place to indulge in that study, however interesting and instructive it may be. I shall content myself with observing that the sentiment embodied in the first stanza of Nammazhwar is exceptional and unique, as no other devotee has started with a plea and a petition on behalf of suffering humanity. The Azhwar's compassion for the world is commensurate only with his love towards God. It is the purpose of this article to indicate how this feeling (and mood) is at the back of the Azhwar's mind throughout the four poems of his, coming to the surface only now and then, but ever present there,—as reflected in several places in the course of the 1296 pasurams of his. The first word of the first stanza of his works stands for falsehood and the last word of the last stanza stands for exaltation. If ever any soul migrated from falsehood to exaltation, it was Nammazhwar, as even the words used by him indicate.

It is said of Prince Siddhartha (Gautama Buddha) that his pity and compassion for the affliction and woe that humanity is subject to, made Him renounce a kingdom and take to the life of a mendicant trying to soothe and heal. He had not however postulated God in his philosophy. Nammazhwar, whose compassion for humanity equalled, even if it did not exceed, Siddhartha's, indulges very frequently in heart-felt prayer to his God to help man to cast off his sin, and partake of the pleasures of divine Bliss. There are indeed occasions when he bitterly complains against God and accuses Him of being selfish and self-centered and not caring for the true welfare of His created beings. There are again occasions when finding that no one here below responds to his call to

come and pray, the Azhwar becomes bitter and says things not very complimentary to man. Thus in his third work "Peria Tiruvandadi" in one place he says: "Let any one do anything he likes. Who can try to correct this wide and diverse world? I rejoice in the feeling that by the grace of Krishna, who is the Lord of the Devas, I have been enabled to wipe out pain and distress from my mind". His fellow-feeling however, very soon asserts itself, and casting off complacency, we find him putting in a plea once more for afflicted men, and telling the Lord that it would be wrong of Him to expect men to think of Him or come to Him even to pray for succour. For, he asks. "What stuff are they made of, and where are they situate? How can You expect them to think of You, or to come to You for relief"? He explains this elsewhere by referring to the primordial sin that prevents man from even bowing his head or clasping his hands in prayer (Peria Tiruvandadi 84) and to the potency of the senses that are strong enough to assail even the Lord's chosen devotees in Paramapada (Tiruvoimozhi VII-i-6).

This alternation of feeling in the Azhwar between sympathy for man in his distress, and disgust at man's waywardness which persists in putting God out of man's thought, word, and deed,—and between praying for his own safety and for the safety of the entire world, is even more markedly seen in his Tiruvoimozhi. Here he is even more vociferous in his condemnation of God's indifference to human woes. He is particularly bitter in III-i-4 where he complains in this wise:

"Already this wretched world is unable to concentrate on the freshness and beauty of Your glorious Form. And to such a distracted world You have given a multitude of conflicting and mutually destructive siddhantas and schisms. If You, who are bound to protect them, indulge in self-satisfaction, and think

of nothing but the freshness and fragrance of your Tulasi garland, will not this wide world go to ruin?"

It will be hard to excel this passionately-worded pasuram in the beauty either of its sentiment or language. That even during his ecstatic moments of God-enjoyment, the Azhwar has an eye towards afflicted humanity and never fails to shed a tear for their inability to partake of the feast of the soul he is revelling in, speaks volumes about Azhwar's compassion for suffering humanity. He is very desirous of partaking of his God-enjoyment with his fellow beings. *ஈடுமின் முற்றவும்* He calls out to them in the very second decad of his Tiruvoimozhi, and again in the 6th and 8th decads of the first centum (*முதல் பத்து*). Can it be mere coincidence that all these three Tiruvoimozhies are couched in short metre quite unlike the others, or can it be that it was a deliberate trick of language indulged in to invite reluctant men into the Divine fold by giving them short and sweet advice? Be that as it may, one thing is clear and that is that the 100 decads of which the Tiruvoimozhi is made up are freely interspersed with pasurams addressed to Azhwars' fellowmen, pointing out to them the emptiness of human life and the vanity of human wishes at times, and at other times drawing their attention to the greatness and glory of God, and to the pleasures and ecstasies derived and derivable from God-life and God-love.

There are several places in the course of the Tiruvoimozhi wherein the Azhwar draws God's attention to the world. The feelings with which he does so are markedly diverse. In IV. ix, he dreads, shuns and abhors the world that he sees before him, and prays to God to take him away and not show to him this wicked world. In VI. iii the Azhwar loses himself in the thought that God combines in Himself all the contradictions known to man. He is poverty, and He is wealth:

He is perdition, and He is paradise; and so on. I think there is reference to about 32 contradictions and contrarieties talked of in this *dasaka* (decad), and the Azhwar is simply amazed at this Viruddha-vibhuti (paradoxical glory) in the course of which also the Azhwar gives free and full expression to his feelings of wonder and amazement at the way the Lord manifests Himself in this world. He puts a question point blank to Him asking Him to divulge the secret by which He manages to be all this—a question to which no answer is vouchsafed except that He is “அறிவரிய இரான்” the Lord who cannot be understood by man.

The Azhwar's desire to probe into the mystery of the universe, however, persists till the very end. Almost the very last question that he puts to his Lord after he is assured of His grace and feels that he is being taken unto His Feet, has relation to the continuance of this world,—His Leela-Vibhuti, The Azhwar softly asks in X viii. 9 “May I know why You Who have now deigned to protect me, left me in the lurch all these bygone days?”—a question which goes to the very root of the continuance of this world. That is a cosmic secret—His secret—which He has yet vouchsafed to no man, but has left all men to probe into and find out for themselves as best as they could. Even the Azhwar, who at the next step is to become a *Mukta* or released soul, does not get an answer to this question. Instead, God extends His loving arms, and draws the Azhwar into their fold unto His bosom in a clasp of love. And the entire cosmos rejoices. All the clouds roar, and all the seas dance in ecstasy at the emancipation of the soul of the Azhwar (X. ix. 1). That is the only answer that God gives to questions relating to the cause of the world. No wonder, various schools of thought give various reasons and find various justifications for the creation and continuance of the world. The wise man seeks to get out of it by invoking God's Mercy and will not waste his life in trying to solve obviously insoluble problems. The

problem of the world is a problem that has never been solved; but it can be very easily dissolved by each one of us by invoking the Lord's Grace and throwing ourselves on it, as Nammazhwar did.

V

THE AZHWAR'S HUMILITY.

It is the way of all poets to preface their works with an expression of their unworthiness to deal with the themes taken up by them. We see Satakopa also doing the same. But he does it in a manner that suggests that such an expression of humility on his part is the outcome, not of mere conventionality, but of a real and deep consciousness of his unworthiness to talk about God. For with him this *anusandhana*, or expression, of humility (which is known as அழைப்படைக்கம் in Tamil literature) is perceivable throughout in all his four works, and does not form a mere preface as it does with almost all the other poets. We have had occasion already to refer to the first stanza of his first work, Tiruviruttam, in which he starts singing in a plaintive and humble mood by making a *vinnappam* or submissive appeal to the Lord. Again and again, in the course of that poem, we see the Azhwar assailed by a feeling of unworthiness born of a realisation of his smallness. In a very moving stanza (verse 94 of Tiruviruttam) the Azhwar says: Only the great Vaidikas can truly claim to bow in all humility before your anjana-like (dark) body and lotus eyes. They alone, therefore, are fit to talk about you. But here I am, trying to sing about you. Shall I tell you what it is like? A vast herd of cows is being taken towards pasture-fields far away from the village. When after going a long way, tempting and rich green grass is sighted, all the cows in the herd send forth sounds of joy. In their midst, however, is a blind cow which cannot see for itself those green pasture-fields that have been sighted by the rest. Nevertheless along with the rest, that blind cow also bellows in

unison. Like that, I also speak of you. What else can I say?" This stanza indeed gives us a very good insight into the mind of the Azhwar, and how he regards his own attempts at praising the Lord. In another Pasuram (the 48th) he refers to the great skill with which God (Tirumal) gets Himself sung by one like his own self. He compares himself to the tiny bacillus wallowing in a wound in a human body,—living, moving, and having its entire existence there; "what can it know of the outside world?" The idea is that the Azhwar knows, and can know, nothing of God. But he is certain that even his words will command attention. Is it not, he asks, an ancient custom to attach significance even to the sounds of a lizard? In yet another pasuram the Azhwar says that his learning the names of the Lord (திருநாமச் சொல்) is like taking a bite out of an unripe fruit for want of a good ripe one. "For" he says "only the Devas of the earth can claim to pay their obeisance to God in the hallowed words of the Vedas" (இருக்கார் மொழி). One is reminded of his immediate predecessor Tirumazhisai Azhwar's words, "இருக்கு வாய் முனிக்கணங்கள் ஏத்த யானும் ஏத்தினேன்". In fact, Nammazhwar uses almost the very same words in a pasuram of his Tiruvoimozhi. "இதைத் து நல்ல மேன் மக்களேத்த யானுமேத்தினேன்". "I also have praised Him who is praised in loud tones by the great and good ones of the earth."

In Nammazhwar's second work Tiruvasiriyam which consists of only 7 pasurams the 4th stanza has got this as its central idea. மாயக்கடவுள் மாமுதலடியே வாழிய என்று யான் தொழு இசையுங்கொல்? Is it possible for me to worship those highly exalted feet of God,—of that great God of maya (wonder)? The idea is that those feet are beyond his worship.

He starts his third work Peria Tiruvandadi with an apology. The second stanza merits being set out here in full:

புகழ்வோம் பழிப்போம், புகழோம் பழியோம்
 இகழ்வோம் மதிப்போம், மதியோம்—இகழோம், மற்ற
 எங்கண்மால் செங்கண்மால், சேறல் நீ, தீவினையோம்
 எங்கள்மால் கண்டாய் இவை.

[Our praise of you really amounts to dispraise, nay, even abuse. As long as we do not attempt to praise you, we at least can have the satisfaction that we have not defamed you. If we demean you, it is really respecting you. If we do not pretend to respect you, it at least ensures that we do not demean you. Our own Lord of Love! O Lord with lotus-like eyes! Kindly do not get angry. These are all the love-antics of ours,—sinners that we are of the worst type.]

A pasuram very much reminiscent of the Upanishadic paradox:—"Avignaataam vijaanataam; Vignaatam avijaanataam". Paradox in sound apart, it talks in a wonderful strain of the wide disparity between the object of praise on the one hand, and the person who seeks to praise, on the other. This pasuram, it must be noted, throughout uses the plural "we" and not the singular "I". The Azhwar here sings about the unworthiness of mankind as a whole and not of himself alone. Putting aside those who never care to utter one word of praise or worship towards God, the Azhwar thinks of the rest of mankind, and on their behalf, submits to the Lord how He transcends words and is beyond praise. The tone of apology in particular is noteworthy where he says "Please do not get angry with us, because we indulge in such behaviour". And he seeks to justify the lapse by referring to the love that impels men to take to praising Him. As he sings seven more stanzas, this feeling of unworthiness for worship overtakes him again, and in the tenth stanza he addresses his mind and says "Who are we and where is worship of Tirumal?" He prefaces this by saying that possibly the eight Vasus, the ekadasa rudras, the dwadasa adityas, and the great two (out of the Trinity, Brahma and Siva) may claim to worship that Tirumal. "Alas" he concludes "we have to

our credit only immense faults". There are other pasurams in this work disclosing a similar mentality. They are not referred to as no attempt is being made here to be exhaustive.

In the Tiruvoimozhi which is the last, and, therefore the ripe, work of the Azhwar, this sentiment gathers even greater strength and is expressed in several ways. In the Tiruvoimozhi (I. iv) beginning with the words "வளவேழ்" the Azhwar thinks of the superiority and transcendence of the Lord, and in a fit of depression at the thought of his own lowliness as against that greatness, he seeks to run away from God, as it were. There the Azhwar sings "அடியேன் சிறிய ஞானத்தன் அறிதல் யார்க்கும் அரியானே அடியேன் காண்பான் அலற்றுவன், இதனில் மிக்கோர் அயர்வுண்டே. ["I of very small intellect hanker to see Him who cannot be known by anyone. Can there be a greater folly than this?"] Unfitness to sing of Him is gradually disclosed to be only a corollary to the appreciation of the Lord's unsurpassed greatness, which is far above human ken.

One can now see that the Azhwar's modesty is not born of a superficial sense of conventionality, but out of an abiding sense of His indescribability. I shall content myself with merely giving references to other pasurams of the Tiruvoimozhi wherein the Azhwar voices a similar sentiment, before I conclude by referring to a wonderful twist he gives to this sentiment. I-10-7; II-5-8; II-8-5; II-8-9; III-1-2; III-1-6; Special mention must be made of the feeling and the idea underlying the last two of the above listed pasurams, In III-1-2 the Azhwar refers to the comparisons, similes, and analogies, that he and others of his ilk indulge in, while trying to describe His indescribable beauty and features: "The lotus can never equal". he says to the Lord. "Your eye or feet. Molten gold can come nowhere near the resplendence of your Form. And so the comparisons

and the suggestions we indulge in, in order to praise You, only show how small and trivial our attempts to praise you are". The idea in III-1-6 is even more superb: "All the sacred words that are uttered by any one in any world are nothing but a pale reflection of your praise. What words can I employ to sing such a You?" These sentiments are the outcome of the exquisite enjoyment vouchsafed to the Azhwar by the Lord of Tirumalirunjolai. (Azhagar-Koil, near Madurai). His name itself is *Azhagar* or the beautiful One, "What shall I call you as" is the refrain of one whole Tiruvoimozhi, the 4th Tiruvoimozhi of the third Centum. There are about 52 என்கோ in the first 8 stanzas of this decad. "என்கோ" means "Shall I say thus". "Shall I call you milk, shall I speak of you as the cream and essence of the four Vedas? Shall I call you as the medicine that is desired by every one, or as the nectar of the sea of milk?" A very good illustration to show how the Azhwar fumbles and flounders for words and expressions suited to Him.

The Azhwar ultimately gives us an insight into the true reason why it has come about that he is praising the Lord, whom he full well knows to be beyond praise. This is in IV. 3. In the 9th pasuram of this Tiruvoimozhi he says "I cannot even speak of you. When can I expect to reach the shores of your immeasurable flood of fame? Where the good and noble men of yore have praised you, I also am praising you". The idea runs into the next pasuram "I shall praise; all the seven worlds may praise; and to add to all that, even He may take to praise Himself. But even then it not possible to praise." "Why, then, do I praise, you may ask," he says turning to the Lord. "As it is sweet to me like honey, milk, and sugarcane-juice, I also praise my Lord so that I may live." யான் உய்வானே. What breathing is to us ordinary mortals, praising God is to the Azhwar,—just a means of going on living.

The Azhwar ultimately finds a solution for all this in VII. 9. By that time his ripe soul realises that all this singing and praise of God by him is nothing but a *leela* or sport of the Lord by which He sings about Himself through him, the Azhwar. In the second pasuram of that decad, he says " என் சொல்லால் யான் சொன்ன இன்கவி என்பித்துத் தன்சொல்லால் தான் தன்னைக் கீர்த்தித்த மாயன் ". Making it appear as if I sing of Him with my own words, He, that wonderful Mayan, (of unfathomable wonder) has praised Himself with His own words ".

A truly wonderful synthesis mingling in itself the humility of the Azhwar, the unspeakable greatness of God, His sport or *leela* by which He enjoys Himself, and His grace with which He blesses His Devotees.



SRI RAMANUJA

[1017-1137 A D]

The great Acharya Ramanuja was born in 1017 A. D. at Sriperumbudur, a village 25 miles from Madras on the trunk road from Madras to Bangalore, in the Tamil month of Chittirai (April May) when the moon was in conjunction with the star Ardra (Tiruvadirai in Tamil). After a course of study under an acharya in the manner of those days, he is said to have taken his lessons in Vedanta from Yadava Prakasa (It is doubtful if it is the same Yadava Prakasa who is the author of a Bhashya on the Vedanta Sutras according to the Bheda-bheda school of thought). The story goes that there was an attempt to drown Ramanuja in the Ganga (Ganges) whither the Guru and his disciples went on Yatra (pilgrimage), and that, warned in time, Ramanuja strayed away from the party in the forests of Vindhya. There he lost his way and his cries of distress in desolation evoked divine sympathy. The Lord of Kanchi, Sri Varadaraja and His Consort, Perundevi (Mahadevi), came to his rescue in the form of a hunter and his wife and after having safely led Ramanuja to the vicinity of Kanchi, they vanished leaving him in wonder and thankful devotion after asking him to fetch water for drinking. (This incident has been immortalised by Sri Vedanta Desika in a sloka of his Yatiraja Saptati and in remembrance or commemoration of it a festival is being conducted every year in the famous temple of Sri Varadaraja). This was the beginning of a series of divine manifestations and miraculous occurrences which were to make Ramanuja the great preceptor that he was to become.

Ramanuja was assailed by serious doubts on several vital points in the interpretation of the Vedanta and of the Sutras of Vyasa based on them. Sri Kanchi Poorna (Thirukkachinambigal of Poona-mallee) who was a very devout Bhakta of Lord

Varadaraja, was approached by him with a request to obtain the Lord's own answers to those doubts. Those answers were vouchsafed to Ramanuja, and through him to the world, in six Vakyas or sentences. Immediately thereafter Ramanuja had his initiation into orthodox Vaishnavism at Madurantakam (50 miles south of Madras) from his chief guru, Maha Poorna (Peria Nambigal) who came in search of this disciple from Srirangam, even as the disciple went in search of that guru from Kancheepuram. Ramanuja had four other Acharyas or preceptors who taught him all the essentials of the philosophy and religion of Vaishnavism which had been handed down from preceptor to disciple in succession, such as the Tamil Vedas (Prabandhams) and their interpretation, the Rahasyarthas (esoteric meanings) and so on. Thus equipped Ramanuja evolved a complete and perfect system of philosophy and expounded it in his works which are nine in number. Three of them are commentaries on the Brahma Sutras of Veda Vyasa; one an epitome of the meaning and significance of the chief upanishadic texts; one is a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita: then there are the three Gadyas and lastly a work called Nithya Grantha relating to the daily routine of a Vaishnava leading a dedicated life. Ramanuja lived for 120 years exceeding the Vedic Satamanam (century limit), and during the major portion of it he lived the life of an ascetic (yati or Sanyasi). He had installed and canonised 74 Acharyas and kept the banner of Visishtadvaita flying over the whole country.

In philosophy, Ramanuja is noted for his synthetic genius and synoptic vision. Where other Acharyas and Bhashyakaras felt impelled to reject portions of the Srutis as not valid, Ramanuja had no difficulty in synthesising the entire Sruties and evolving out of them one single thought. 'Iti Sarvam Samanjasam' (thus has everything been synthesised) are the words with which he winds up his commen-

taries on the Sutras. That in itself is an achievement of a very high order. Ramanuja went on to synthesise the world and God. As glibly as the materialist (Charvaka) affirms the existence of the world and denies God, the Advaitin had affirmed the existence of God and denied the world, which is said to be a mere myth or illusion. And even as God survived the onslaughts of materialism, the world has survived the argumentations of the mayavadin. It was left to Ramanuja to affirm the equal truth and validity of both world and God, the two existing side by side not as two irreconcilable and mutually-at-war elements, but as a homogeneous whole organically united, even as the body and soul, and as the body and its component parts. The difference between them is not in connotation but only in denotation. The material and its attribute are two ideas but are one in substance. This line of reasoning of material and attribute (Viseshya and Viseshana) has earned for the system evolved by Ramanuja the name Visishtadvaita. As a result of this relationship between God and the World (including man as well as matter) the individual soul obtains an ideal to strive for. Human life became ennobled. In advaitism man has to alternate between leading a false life (as life is unreal) and claiming to be God (Aham Brahmasmi). To man neither view of the human soul conduces to moral responsibility, and that is a potential danger in spite of the fact that the Acharyas who preached and practised Advaita were men of the noblest character and loftiest attainments. This danger was done away with in Ramanuja's view of the individual soul as a mode or Prakara of the Para Brahman or Absolute Godhead. And in finding a reason for the creation and continuance of this world of avidya and evil, is it not more modest to take the responsibility for the same on our own selves and attributing them to our own karma (past deeds), rather than to attribute it to the inability of Brahman, the Absolute, to resist the impact of *maya* on itself?

If we turn to the nature of God-head, here also Ramanuja's contribution is unique. The God of his conception is not a mere existence without qualities or attributes, without fineness or flavour. He is a perfect Being possessed of all auspicious qualities, the essence of them being Daya or Mercy which gilds and brightens all His other qualities, such as gnana, sakthi and so on. Thus where others laid emphasis on divinising man by making him think of himself as God, Ramanuja has humanised God, and rendered it possible for us to obtain salvation at His hands by relying on His Mercy rather than on our own knowledge or gnana.

The soul clings to the body as much as the body to the soul; and the soul of man that God is, He is far more fond of man than man can ever be fond of Him. Once we realise this, our whole attitude changes. The centre of gravity shifts from our own individual selves to God. Karma is quelled by Kripa, and man's every action becomes a mode of worship, as gloriously pictured in the closing mantra of the Taitreeya Upanishad. Fear of God yields place to love, love not only towards Him but towards all creation that is His. By a touch of the magic wand of sareera-sareeri (Body-soul) analogy the world becomes a unified whole with all its component parts in perfect position and no discord. 'He who sees every thing in Me and sees Me in everything' is hailed by Lord Sri Krishna as the true seer. Ramanuja was such a seer and his works are calculated to help those who study them to become similar seers themselves.

May the unifying and synthesising spirit of Ramanuja be on us, and may it bring to a world distracted by divisions and dissensions,—concord, harmony and peace.



RAMANUJA SIDDHANTA

Historians and modern research scholars tell us that during the centuries that intervened between Sankara and Ramanuja, the wave of the Bhakti cult, or the path of devotion, swept over the whole of India. As Ramanuja came into this world after the great Tamilian devotees known as the Azhwars, he laid emphasis on Bhakti (or God-love) as much as on Gnana (or God-knowledge), unlike Sankara who, in accordance with the genius of his times, had laid stress on Gnana alone as the means of attaining salvation. The concept of God-head also changed, and in the place of the Nirguna (attributeless) Brahman postulated by Sankara, Ramanuja evolved a God of beauteous form and figure, full of all auspicious and good qualities (Kalyana gunas) and opposed to evil of every sort (Heya-pratibhata). *Saguna sruties* and *Nirguna Srutis* were both thus given significance and meaning, *nirguna* being taken to indicate absence of bad or evil attributes and not a total absence of every form of attribute. Brahman now becomes Srinivasa and one can see the two terms equated with each other even in the very first (the mangala) sloka of Ramanuja's Sri Bhashya (Sutra Bhashya). The Iswara of the Advaita Siddhanta did of course possess qualities and answered somewhat to the description of the Saguna Brahman talked of by the srutis, but Ramanuja's full-fledged God with a name and form and attributes, all on an eternal basis and not having foundations in illusion, was a more true, a more valid and a vastly more attractive personality. The *upasaka* was thus presented with a more lovable and gracious God,—a personal God, so to say, taking the place of an abstract Brahman.

Consistently with this postulate of the highest Godhead, the 'Tatwa, Hita and Purushartha were re-stated by Ramanuja in a more appealing form, which satisfied the intellectual quest of the human soul for

God, and, at the same time, furnished food for that great human emotion, love. Contemplation of God became pleasant and Sadhana Bhakti (Bhakti as means) became as sweet and enjoyable as Sadhya Bhakti (Bhakti that is aspired for). It is like asking a patient to take milk and sugar and all the delicacies known to the tongue as a remedy for his disease. The centre was shifted from the "aham" or one's own self, to God, the Highest Self. "Soham". (I am He) gave place to "Daasoham" (I am His servant). Karma (or action) is transmuted into Kainkarya or divine service, and work is sublimated into worship. *Punya* (good deeds) and *Papa* (sin) have no more any value in the matter of the spiritual progress of the soul. Both of them are chains that keep us bound in Samsara (the cycle of births and deaths). *Punya* may be a golden chain and *Papa* an iron chain, but both are chains. The only true *Punya* is to strive for union with God every moment of our life; the only *Papa* is to forget Him and to think and act as if we are independent of Him. Realising that God alone is the source and sustenance of every individual soul, we entirely yield ourselves up to Him in thought, word and deed, and become Prapannas. Our sins classified by Ramanuja in the Saranagati Gadya as Bhagavat-apachara (sins towards God), Bhaagavata - apachara (sins towards His true devotees), Asahya-apachara (insufferable sins) and so on, sins that have been committed, that are being committed, and that are going to be committed in thought word and deed,—all of them without exception get "scorched like cotton in fire" (as stated by an Upanishad and in the fifth verse of Tiruppavai). The Lord's declaration from the charioteer's seat in Arjuna's *Ratha* (car) comes true and we are released by His grace from all sins (Sarvapaape-bhyaha.)

Here certainly is a very sweet and attractive system more appealing to the common man and more

within his grasp. In addition to it, the theory evolved is of universal application and is conducive to the well-being and amelioration of all men and communities.

Sareera-Sareeri bhava or body-soul relationship is the key-stone of Ramanuja's edifice of philosophy known by the name of Visishtadvaita Siddhanta. It means that God sustains, commands, and obtains all benefits from, the individual soul, who in turn is sustained and commanded by God and exists only for Him. God, Man and Matter are now organically linked up and united. And each individual soul therefore is a part, however small, of this homogeneously linked up system. The corollaries derivable from this synthesis are numerous and every one of them leads to the greater happiness and well-being of man. If all the souls are *prakaras* or modes of Brahman or Godhead, they being like several parts in the anatomy of the human body, does it not follow that they must all act in unison and work for the welfare of the entire body and that there can be no room for conflict or quarrel between one man and another, any more than there can be between one part of the body and another? The Visishtadvaita principle of *aprtak-siddha* (inseparable connection) holds good also in spheres other than the spiritual, and is sure to yield very good and happy results if steadfastly kept in view and steadily brought into practice. Just as there can be no conflict between man and man, there can be no hitch or internecine trouble within groups or associations of men. Taking the family as a unit, the entire family is the soul, as it were, and the members of the family different parts of that family's body. The impartibility of the family is thus emphasised and each member works for the welfare of the family. From family to society is the next step. Every member of the society is, so to say, an *anga* (member) of the society which is the *angi* or body. If this relationship between an individual and the society is

kept in mind, there can be no conflict between the interests of an individual and the interests of the society. And similarly with regard to a State and its citizens, the federation of States and each individual State, between nation and nation, and ultimately between international weal and national weal. The harmonious blending and homogenous concept involved in the synthetic body-soul conception is capable of very wide expansion and universal application.

No wonder therefore that Swami Vivekananda,—stalwart Advaitin as he is,—has paid a high compliment to Ramanuja in the following terms:—"Ramanuja...with a most practical philosophy, a great appeal to the emotions, an entire denial of birthrights before spiritual attainments, and appeals through the popular tongue, completely succeeded in bringing the masses back to the Vedic Religion".



DESIKA DARSANA.

The foundations—deep and strong—for Visishtadvaita Siddhanta were laid in the remote past by Tanka, Dramida, Guhadeva and Bodhayana in the shape of Bhashyas and *vrithies* on the Brahma Sutras of Veda Vyasa. Saint Yamunacharya, or Alavandar as he is popularly known, raised the Siddhanta on those foundations to the basement level in his Siddhi Traya etc., works, leaving it to Sri Ramanuja to complete the edifice in and by his world-renowned Sri Bhashya, into a finished and glorious one. But it was Vedanta Desika, that enriched and beautified that edifice by building compound walls and several very useful outhouses, and by illuminating the entire area by the scintillating brilliance of his Kavita-Samarthya (poetic skill) and Tarka Naipunya (logical dexterity). Visishtadvaita Siddhanta enshrined in the Sri Bhashya was re-told and extolled in verse in the Adhikarana Saravali and explained in the Tatva Teeka (of which however only a portion is now extant). Nyaya and Mimamsa were annexed by Desika as such to the Visishtadvaitic system, by his Nyaya Siddhanjanam and Nyaya Parisuddhi on the one hand, and Sesvara Mimamsa and Mimamsa Paduka on the other. “Tatva-mukta Kalapa” and Desika’s own commentary on it “Sarvartha Siddhi” enunciate and clarify the doctrines of the Siddhanta in a very succinct manner. [A great Acharya has observed very aptly that Desikas’ Sarvagnyatva (all-knowingness) is illustrated by Tatva-muktakalapa.] Paancharatra, to establish the ancientness and validity of which Bhagavad Ramanuja took so much pains in his several works, has received its full meed of tribute and praise in the Paancharatra Raksha.

Not content with original works such as the above, Vedanta Desika has written commentaries upon the Isavasyopanishad, Alavandar’s Stotra-Ratna and Chatusloki, and Ramanuja’s Gadya Traya, in addition

to writing an elaborate commentary, Tatparya Chandrika, on Ramanuja's Gita Bhashya. These and other works like Sat-Charitra-Raksha, Satha-Dooshani, and the Rahasyas, big and small, aim at preserving the sanctity and purity of Visishtadvaita Siddhanta by repelling and keeping out hostile and adverse criticisms levelled at this Siddhanta by others.

DESIKA'S RAMANUJA BHAKTI.

The works of Vedanta Desika are as much the result of his own masterly understanding and appreciation of Visishtadvaita Siddhanta as of his unparalleled devotion to, and admiration for, Bhagavad Ramanuja. Desika's attachment to the feet of that King among preceptors, Ramanuja, whom he exultingly refers to very often as Yatiraja (king among Sanyasis) borders almost on infatuation. One can assert without fear of contradiction that even Desika's God love was only next to his Bhakthi towards Ramanuja. Numerous are the passages, slokas and pasurams, in the course of his numberless works in four languages, Samskrit, Tamil, Manipravala and Prakrit, which literally exude Desika's Acharya-Bhakti in relation to Ramanuja. Amudanar said that even God must come to him only through Ramanuja; Desika ascribes God's own greatness to His being the object of Ramanuja's worship. He would have it that it is only by Ramanuja's Pada-Koteerayoho-Sambhanda (connection with his feet or his head) that all Acharyas before and after Ramanuja shine, including necessarily the Lord Himself, and Sri, His Consort, Who are the primordial Acharyas. All the spiritual greatness and far-famed glory achieved by Desika is found set down in the Yatiraja Saptati (63) as due to his having had his intellect developed by contact with Ramanuja's great Sampradaya, and to his incessant praise of Ramanuja's great gunas. Desika's own immediate preceptor was also called Ramanuja (Atreya Ramanuja) and in one sloka of Nyasa Tilaka, Desika thanks

the Lord for having vouchsafed to him as Acharya the great-grandson of Ramanuja's most intimate disciple, Kidambi Achchan. It looks as if Desika was really not satisfied with all this, and had a grouse against the Lord for not having blessed him with direct contact with the feet of Bhagavad Ramanuja. Being a descendant of Sage Viswamitra who began to create a Swargaloka of his own, Desika too indulges in a creation in which he attains his heart's desire of being a direct disciple of Sri Bhashyakara. In the Second Act of Sankalpa Sooryodaya, a creation of Desika's dramatic and poetic skill, Ramanuja the ascetic is shown as the preceptor or guru, having Desika himself as his disciple or Sishya. Viveka is the ruler and Sumati his queen-consort. It is evidently Desika's conviction that wherever they rule, Ramanuja is to be the Acharya and Desika the disciple. Can devotion to an Acharya go further!

DIVINE COUPLE

By far the greatest of the contributions of Desika to Ramanuja Siddhanta are (1) his concept of the Divine Couple as the Tatva, the Hita and the Purushartha and (2) his synthesis of the Samskrit Vedanta and the Dramidopanishad (Alvars' Tamil works) into a homogeneous Ubhaya Vedanta. To work up the analogy with which we started, in the grand and glorious mansion that Ramanuja built, Desika has celebrated two marriages, one between God and His Consort, and the other between Samskrit and Tamil; in other words, a marriage among the Prameyas and a marriage among the Pramanas. With the ardour with which his ancestor Viswamitra had united Rama and Sita in wedlock, Desika has in the course of his numerous works, blended the concept of Narayana, and that of Sri or Lakshmi, into a Couple or Dampatee. The copious references to them as Divya Dampatee, Saranya Dampatee, and Seshi Dampatee show how Desika has postulated not the Lord alone, nor

Sri alone, as the ultimate God-head, but the blend of the two in a Nitya-yoga (or eternal union) as the ultimate God-head. The word Dampatee in Samskrit is a Nitya Dvivachana, never lending itself to singular or plural terminology.

UBHAYA VEDANTA

So too, among the Pramanas. or authorities, Desika was the first to celebrate publicly the holy union of the Samskrit and the Tamil Vedas. The betrothal (Nischitartam) had already taken place in the time of Ramanuja, if not earlier; but the actual wedding with all its attendant pomp, pageantry and publicity was celebrated only by Desika. Ramanuja's mission being what it was,—the exposition of the Sareera-Sareeri-Bhava (Body-Soul-relationship) between the world and God as the ultimate meaning or Parama-Tatparaya of the Upanishads and the Sutras,—he was obliged to leave several topics apparently untouched and several pramanas (like the Dramidopanishad) apparently unnoticed in his works. A generation later even the great Parasara Bhatta, than whom it is impossible to name a greater Ubhaya-Vedanta-Acharya, felt that the time was not ripe even then for doctrinising Ubhaya Vedanta as a system, though it was being practised by him, as indeed it had been by his elders. The time evidently became ripe enough in Desika's days; and when the call came to him from Srirangam to Kancheepuram to establish the equal validity of the Tamil Scriptures with that of the Samskrit Scriptures, he repaired thither and dispelled all doubts and quelled all disputations on the point by unequalled scholarship and unrivalled polemic skill. They can be seen now in his Dramidopanishad Saram, and Dramidopanishad Tatparya Ratnavali. Lord Ranganatha, it is said, was so pleased at this achievement of Desika that He bestowed on Desika the title of "Ubhaya Vedantacharya". (This episode is vouched for by Desika's own works).

But Desika has not arrogated to himself the role of being the initiator of the Ubhaya Vedanta Siddhanta. He says that Nathamunigal inaugurated it, Alavandar's works fostered it with great care, and Ramanuja protected it beautifully well. At the same time, succeeding generations of Vaishnavaites cannot help thinking that but for Desika's works the two streams of Samskrit culture and Tamil culture would have been flowing apart, and however much one could have taken one's bath in each of them separately, it would not have been possible to plunge in their mingled and blended waters. As it has happened, Desika's Saraswati (language) has, as an Antarvahini (flowing underground), brought about a Triveni Sangama (confluence of three rivers), by mixing the waters of the Ganga (Upanishads) and of the Yamuna (Prabandhas) and by merging itself therein like the river Saraswati. By bathing in this Triveni Sangama, no wonder therefore, we are all able today to get rid of our Tapa (heat) and Papa (sin) and feel refreshed and redeemed in body and soul.



PART III
PEEPS

PART III
PEEPS

ARCHA-ANUBHAVA

(GLORY OF IMAGE—WORSHIP.)

To the most ardent devotee of God there is one feeling or conception which is very hard to attain. Howevermuch one may believe in the Shastras in general, and in the Agamas relating to Idol-consecration and Idol-worship in particular, the problem very often presents itself in a very acute form, whether, after all, one is capable of feeling and behaving in the presence of the Idols in Temples, as one would in the presence of a living person. This doubt has presented itself to many of my ardent and pious friends, and, not infrequently, I have been myself assailed with the same doubt welling up in the innermost recesses of my heart. I never felt the force and weight of this great doubt as when, in the year 1923, one of the greatest of the present-day Yathies (Sannyasis) bluntly put me the question, "Sir! Do you feel while in the presence of the beloved Idol of your heart, as you feel now, while you are standing before me?". That question gave a definite shape to the vague doubt that was gnawing away my faith in Idol worship. Since then too, the question has very often presented itself to me, and I am glad to be able to record that, more often than not, I have, by God's grace, been able to feel that to me God's Idol is a Living Personality, and His Sannidhanam a Living Presence.

It must be pointed out at the outset that the early ideas that are imbibed by most of us as part of our school education, that idols are mere emblems that can remind us of the Supreme Being, that Idols are only aids to concentration, and that apart from these traits, Idols have no sacredness or sanctity,—such ideas as these have largely contributed to, and are mainly responsible for, our present-day confused and degraded notions about the Images of God which we

worship in our Temples. What may be sound bits of advice to people who have got to be perpetually *reminded* of God may not necessarily be good or wholesome to people who feel the omnipresence of God, and do not need visible reminders of Him. Nor will the argument that is intended to convert the unbeliever ever appeal to the downright and implicit believer, or help him in his belief. So that if we cast off these half-truths and cloudy notions about Idols and get our vision clarified with the help of the very Shastras which postulate God as a certain Being in one place, and hand Him down to us, in another place, in the form of vivid Idols which, according to them, He has Himself chosen of His free will to make His special Abodes,—many of our difficulties would have been overcome, many of our doubts dispelled.

As these few lines are addressed not to atheists or agnostics, but to those who without doubt or uncertainty have already postulated a God in their hearts, it is not necessary for me to begin by asserting or proving the existence of a God or His omnipresence. And omnipresence being conceded to God, it must follow that the Idol which is intended to visibly personify Him for the pleasure of His devotees must also contain Him. The efficacy of the consecrating mantras is said to be so potent that once the installation or *pratishta* is duly performed, the Idol acquires abnormal, and,—what is a matter of personal experience with many,—super-natural powers. If by the mere Dharsan of certain Idols, or the taking of vows with respect to certain others, certain phenomena occur which cannot be rationally explained or explained away with reference to any known theories of scientific or other laws, it must be admitted that Idols do have life to a certain extent or in a certain measure. The question then is, where are we to stop at this conception of life or potency in the Idol? Are we only to feel it as a blind,

unseeing, and unseeable Force functioning within certain local limits, or are we to take the whole thing as equally true, and feel that God has certainly pleased to manifest Himself in this shape and with this Form? Where then is the objection to take the Idol as the visible Body,—one of myriads of bodies which the Lord can assume and has very often assumed,—of the Lord, even as our body is of our soul? To see Him fully manifested in the Idol is not to deny Him in other places, or in other forms. It is only seeing Him intensely in that place.

Now then, having arrived at a mentality wherein His Idol is regarded as His Body, it is very easy for us, whose primary inclinations are towards Dehatma-Vada, or mistaking the body for the soul, to equate the Idol with Him. So that to all intents and purposes the Idol, to the ardent devotee, becomes *the* God. This idea refined and developed leads to that state which Sri Vedanta Desika so exquisitely describes as the state of oscillation between "The Idol is You", and "The Idol is Yours". What a beautiful conception, this? Only those who have derived and enjoyed the excellent pleasures that it affords can understand.

I have somewhere heard the story of a gentleman who was originally in the habit of worshipping Gods in Temples, but who seems to have dropped it on account of the following incident. It seems, on one occasion when he was worshipping in the *Sanctum sanctorum*, he perceived a cockroach slowly travelling over the Body of the Idol. At once, it appears, he was struck with the idea that a God who cannot ward off a cockroach from travelling over Him was not worthy of worship by an intelligent man, as he thought himself to be. That seems to have marked a change in his mentality towards Idols, and from that moment it is said, he desisted from idol-worship. So much the worse, I say, for a cockroach-shaken belief, and not

for Image worship. It is a pity it did not suggest itself to the intelligent gentleman, that God is, if He is really the wise and powerful Being He is taken to be, tolerating and enduring a good lot more than mere cockroach peregrinations over His Body. What about the blasphemous atheist who denies the very existence of God under the very nose of an omnipresent God? Is he struck down by the fury of the Omnipotent, as, rightly judging, he ought to be? What again, one is tempted to ask, about those who are committing sins and by the force of those very sins prosper enormously in material welfare, while those who are virtuous, pious, and godly, suffer untold miseries, and die the death of a beggar,—victims to human exploitation? How again to account for the unspeakable miseries that are the inheritance of this earth? How, I ask, are we to explain these consistently with the existence of, and superintendence by, a good and gracious God? But if in spite of these and other similar arguments, one's faith in God as a Being is not going to be shaken, why should one's faith in God's Image as a Living Personality suffer any shock on account of the harmless behaviour of an innocent cockroach, which at least cannot understand what it is doing? It appears to be the way of the world to confound non-interfering toleration with stupid insensibility.

Even at the risk of being autobiographical I wish to record here an incident which will bring out with great force the possible extent on the other side to which a realisation of life in the Idol can or will reach. It was a Garudotsavam day when the Lord of my heart (I mean the Idol whom I love most) seated on the vehicle 'Garuda' traversed through a long distance of over eight miles in the hottest part of the hottest day in the hottest month of the year. Having accompanied Him for a major portion of that distance, I returned home a little earlier than the God. As soon as I entered my house, my mother looked at me

and remarked with concern "What a sunburnt and faded face? Why do you put yourself to so much trouble?" At once and in answer thereto I blurted out, vainly trying to push back a torrent of blinding tears, "Mother! you care for me so much that you are pained at this small exertion of mine. But if my Lord who will be here in a minute had a mother, and she saw Him come back in the plight in which He is coming back, O! how much more anguish she will feel at seeing that Divine and Blissful Face faded with the dust of miles and scorched with the heat of the merciless sun? But as He has no mother there is no chance of any one feeling for Him for all the trouble, pain and exhaustion He is putting Himself to." This frame of mind illustrates, I take it, a fairly extreme position to which the sort of rapturous fancy, which sees life fully manifesting, and manifested in the Idol, will easily lead one. But though I am conscious that a very large section of my own friends would scoff at me for this sort of 'sentimental nonsense' yet I cannot help feeling sorry that all my thoughtful moments are not imbued and endowed with the same height of emotion, breadth of vision, and ecstasy of feeling. To me that is truly a state of mind worth striving for.

I do not propose to convince by profuse quotations of texts. But I desire to advert to the experience or *anubhava* of our great religious Seers such as the Alwars and Acharyas. They have uniformly sung in praise of the Idols in the several Divya Desas. Their sayings most emphatically and unambiguously point to the fact that they were not praising an abstract God, or His attributes in the abstract, but a personal and living God, who to them stood personified in the piece of stone, wood, or copper before them. How else are we to account for their breaking their hearts over the pose or poise of the Lord at each of the several Kshetras? There can be no gainsaying the fact that they saw the Lord in flesh and blood,—these are the most 'life-like' terms in our vocabulary and under-

standing,—residing in the Idol. It is even said that with one of those great men one of the most living and life-like of Idols held a conversation. And to this day any one who obtains a vision of the rapturous Form of that Idol will not fail to see, that, while seemingly most ready to open Its Lips, if the Idol does not actually talk, It is our fault (because we have not learnt to understand its language,) and not the Idol's, that It does not talk. How many of us, I wonder, can bear to remain privately closeted with a realistic Idol, alone for even a few seconds? We will be afraid in our heart of hearts that in spite of our denying It life, It may in some way harm us.

To most of us with an innate craving for a personal God, the Idol is truly a Divine gift. It may be easy to glibly talk of impersonal Gods and Nirguna Brahman. But the aesthetic longing of the human heart can never be satisfied except by the contemplation and the vision of a glorius Form and a radiant Figure. Philosophies may postulate the Formless and Figureless; even the Shastras may in some places point a halting finger to an attributeless Absolute; but the practical contemplation of the Formless or Figureless can only end in sleep or self-annihilation for the individual soul. A craving for pleasure is inherent in the human heart. And to me, a God with a captivating Figure is somebody worth knowing and loving, while a God who is nothing but an empty nothingness, an arid waste, a Spiritual Sahara, is a someone with whom I frankly admit I do not desire even the most casual acquaintance. Those who share these rather extreme views with me will agree that a personal God is a most potent factor in one's spiritual life. And nothing but Idols can, situate as we are, give to us the nearest conception of, and form in themselves, the personal Gods we need so much. Being the denizens of this earth which precludes the possibility of Para and Vyuha forms of the Lord, not having been gifted to live in times when the Lord

chose to come down as Avatar (and even then where is the guarantee that we might not have been Kamsas and Sisupalas, instead of Vidhuras and Akruras) not being able, owing to lack of gnana and shakti, to see in ourselves the ever-present Antaryami, the only alternative left to us is to resort to the Archa to satisfy our spiritual longings and our aesthetic cravings. In the Archa we can find One to pander to our pleasure-loving senses, a moral Judge to whom we can confess our failings and and our sins, and obtain pardon; the ultimate Redeemer, by surrendering ourselves at whose Feet, we can obtain the otherwise unattainable Moksha. Hence it is that Sri Vedanta Desika describes the Lord's Archarupa as the Lord's "Daya Karya", or work of Mercy, as the Anjana (collyrium) which discloses the hidden treasures of spiritual Bliss, and as a panacea for all the ills of earthly life, – and a factor that converts Samsara into Moksha, and even this earth into Vaikunta. And hence too it is that great and noble men feel so much of life in God's Archas. that they feed Him, and they rest Him; and they eternally long to live around Him singing to Him many and many more *Pallandus*, (several years of glory.)



II

JUDGMENT OF ACHARYAS.

GOD - vs. - MAN.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE SPHERES

Extraordinary Original Spiritual Jurisdiction.

PRESENT :

THEIR HOLY LORDSHIPS

Sri SANKARACHARYA, C. J.,
Sri RAMANUJACHARYA and
Sri MADHVACHARYA, JJ.

God *alias* Paramatma. ... Plaintiff.

vs.

Man *alias* Jeevatma. ... Defendant.

This is an action brought by the Plaintiff praying for a declaration that the defendant is His own property, that the defendant has no manner of title nor even any possessory interest in himself and for an injunction restraining the defendant from exercising any rights over himself, and from setting up a title hostile to that of the Plaintiff.

The defendant pleaded *inter alia* that he had title in himself and that in any case his right over himself had ripened into absolute ownership by prescription. He put the Plaintiff to strict proof of the allegations in the plaint and added that the suit is purely vexatious, having its origin in the jealousy with which the plaintiff views the ever-growing material strength and prosperity of the defendant.

Two issues were framed by the Court for trial.

1. Is the relationship set up in the plaint true, valid and binding on the defendant?

2. What relief, if any, is the plaintiff entitled to?

The Plaintiff filed on His side the following documents: The Vedas marked as Exhibit A, the Upanishads marked as Exhibit B, and the Bhagavat Gita marked as Exhibit C, and examined (1) Himself, (2) Narada, and (3) Parasara, as His witnesses.

The defendant filed no documents, but examined himself as his only witness.

The parties argued each his own case, and the following judgements were delivered by the Court:—

Sri Sankaracharya C. J.

This is an action for a declaration and injunction. The main allegations in the plaint are as follow. The Plaintiff is a Being of undoubted and unquestionable supremacy, being the Lord of the Universe, visible and invisible; that all beings therein and thereon, sentient and otherwise, are made, preserved and destroyed at His will and pleasure; that from time immemorial the aforesaid beings, sentient and otherwise, have always paid homage to the Plaintiff in various forms accepting Him as their Lord Supreme to whom they are bound by various ties of gratitude, faithfulness, and love; that on some occasions of late the defendant alone of all such beings aforesaid had tried to secure an exclusive interest in himself thereby trying to deny and do away with the unquestioned supremacy of the Plaintiff; that on all such occasions the Plaintiff had either in person or by His authorised agents put an end to such illegal and unlawful attempts by then and there obtaining an open recognition of His rights over the defendant, and effectively silencing the defendant's endeavours at overthrowing Him, that after such occasions the defendant continued to

pay the usual homage to the Plaintiff as before; that while so, during the last few years the defendant relying on his gradually accumulated material prosperity and slowly acquired scientific skill has made definite advances and inroads into the plaintiff's rights, and is seeking to sweep aside the Plaintiff's hold on him, and to recognise various other powers as supreme, such as Nature, nay even Nothingness; that in spite of notices and other steps taken by the Plaintiff, the defendant continues to be obstinate and firm in repudiating the Plaintiff and His title; that therefore the Plaintiff prays for the aforesaid reliefs.

The defendant in his equally long written statement denies in toto that he had at any time anything to do with the plaintiff, that he has always been, and still is, his own master; that the plaintiff's allegations touching his subordination to the plaintiff, his paying homage to him, etc., have no foundation whatever in fact; that even if there were such a relationship existing at any time it is illegal and opposed to public policy, and as such should not be enforced by this Court; that at any rate the defendant has obtained an indefeasible right by prescription and adverse possession, since from time immemorial he has been his own master and has never subjected his will to that of the plaintiff or of any other; that the allegations in the plaint are entirely opposed to immemorial custom and long-standing usage by which the defendant has been entirely independent of the plaintiff in thought, word, and deed, that for the abovesaid reasons the relationship even if true and valid is not binding on him; that therefore the suit must be dismissed with costs.

Upon the above pleadings the following two issues were raised.

1. Is the relationship set up in the plaint true, valid and binding on the defendant?
2. What relief, if any, is the plaintiff entitled to?

The parties conducted their respective cases and the whole trial was therefore marked by a steadfastness of interest, a clear and concise statement of each party's case, a well directed examination of witnesses and a brief and effective argument.

The main point in dispute in this case may be stated to be the difference that arises by the rival claims *Tvam me* "Thou art Mine" and *Aham me* "I am mine" by the plaintiff and defendant respectively. We are in short asked to decide which of these two is to be the applicable rule and to uphold it.

The plaintiff relies both on title and possession. On the question of title he has put in two documents Ex. A (the Vedas) and Ex. B. (the Upanishads). Taking Ex. A first, it certainly lays down in unambiguous terms various rules and ceremonies which the defendant is to observe and perform in order to propitiate the plaintiff, thereby certainly showing beyond doubt or dispute the position of the defendant in relation to the Plaintiff. A bare perusal of the rituals laid down therein as imperatively performable by the defendant would make the defendant's present contention absolutely unsupportable. There are again other hymns contained in Exhibit A which are to be sung by the defendant on various prescribed occasions and these also show decisively the supremacy of the Plaintiff. So far as Exhibit A goes, these hymns would even amount to admissions which will be conclusive against the defendant on the question of title. When a document of such antiquity as Ex. A is produced from proper custody before the Court, the Court should not too carefully scrutinise the date and signature of the document. The defendant himself does not seek to deny the genuineness of Exhibit A but only contends it is not admissible in evidence because of such formal and technical defects. We are not prepared to agree with him. Moreover we are here sitting in extraordinary spiritual jurisdiction and

time and date which may be of much import in matters temporal, count not when we are dealing with matters spiritual. For all these reasons we overrule this contention of the defendant.

The other and more serious objection to the conclusiveness of Exhibit A is this. Although it is clear from Exhibit A that the defendant is to perform certain ceremonies and recite hymns indicative of his subordination, yet the Plaintiff has not let in any evidence to show that these were at any time actually performed and recited by the defendant uniformly and uninterruptedly. None of the witnesses examined on behalf of the Plaintiff has spoken a word about the observance of the dictates in Exhibit A by the defendant or that he contented himself with occupying the inferior rank attributed to him therein. We are not prepared to give the Plaintiff a decree on the strength of the bare and uncorroborated recitals of Exhibit A.

Exhibit-B stands on a different footing and is really conclusive in Plaintiff's favour. It is not necessary for us here to examine in detail the nature of such a well-known treatise as the Upanishads. Suffice it to say that it deals admittedly with the relationship between Jive and Iswara (Defendant and Plaintiff in the present suit). The defendant has not, wisely enough, attempted to question its genuineness or its authenticity. The document is properly proved and it only remains for us to see whether the contents thereof go to support the Plaintiff's case. The major portion of the several booklets that go to form Exhibit-B is directed towards inquiring into the true nature or Swarupa of Jiva, of Iswara, and of the inter-relation between them. The several opinions expressed at various places in this lengthy treatise, are it is true, not uniform or consistent; but it is not possible to miss the undercurrent which runs through each and every statement there to the effect that the jiva can never be, and has never been, independent of the Paramatma,

who it declares in clear and unambiguous terms to be the Lord of all the worlds, infinite in might and mercy, or, to adopt a most characteristic expression found in the Taittireeya, "Satyam Gnanam Anant-am". After this it would be vain for the defendant to question the all-pervading supremacy of the Plaintiff; and in fact the only attempt made by the defendant was to try to show that personally he was out of the reign of this supremacy. But even there Exhibit-B is dead against him. The very frequent reiterations in terms such as "Tat tvam asi" and "Ekam eva advitiyam" put the matter beyond doubt or dispute. Statements such as these made *ante litem motem* by persons of unquestionable and unquestioned authority to speak in these matters, and supported by the oral evidence of Plaintiff's witnesses 2 and 3 make only one conclusion possible. We therefore find on the question of title in favour of the plaintiff.

This finding takes us to the other plea of the defendant, viz., adverse possession. In a case of this sort the onus of showing adverse possession for the necessary period is on the defendant. We have had our own doubts whether the right claimed by the Plaintiff in this case can at all be wiped out by any amount of adverse possession. We do not however think it necessary to give any definite opinion on that aspect of the case. The plea of the defendant is this: that although at one period in the history of the world it might have been true that he had been totally subservient to the Plaintiff in thought, word and deed, he had by definite acts of omission and commission declared openly his independence of the Plaintiff's hold, and, had from a time beyond human reckoning asserted his individuality; that he has persisted in this course of conduct with openness, hostility, and notorieity, for such a length of time that the Plaintiff's right to-day is barred by the Statute of Limitation. With this contention we are not disposed to agree. I

am of opinion that the Plaintiff has established such a relationship between Himself and the defendant that the latter has no existence apart from that of the Plaintiff. They are in fact one and it is the unfortunate illusion of the defendant that has made him think he is not, and to swear hard that he has broken the identity and stood alone. In this state of affairs it is impossible for the defendant to prescribe for any independent title, even if he should have established his having done so as a matter of fact. The nature of the inter-relation as laid down in Exhibit-B renders it impossible to regard any act or omission on the part of the defendant as in any way hostile to the Plaintiff.

There is yet another answer to this plea. There has been no uniform or uninterrupted enjoyment on the part of the defendant. What all has been established by his evidence is that for short and fitful periods the defendant has tried to set up his independence, but that very soon the Plaintiff by some overwhelming phenomenon or other has successfully regained His supremacy and obtained an acknowledgement thereof from the defendant himself. Exhibit C the Bhagavat Gita is a specific instance where a predecessor-in-title of the defendant admitted to the Plaintiff what the defendant has now taken upon himself unblushingly to deny. I do not feel called upon to say more on this question. I most unhesitatingly find that the defendant has entirely failed to discharge the heavy burden that lies on him to prove the adverse possession necessary to defeat the Plaintiff's title, and accordingly find the point against him.

The above findings dispose of the truth and binding nature of the Plaintiff's claim. The only question that remains is as to the validity of the plaintiff claim. The major portion of the defendant's argument has been directed to this part of the case. He has tried to show to us that it is opposed to all notions of freedom and self-respect; and that public policy in these days

of liberalised views demands a denial of such rights as the one now put forward on behalf of the Plaintiff. Speaking for myself I must state that I was not in the least taken in by these high-sounding phrases and delusive epithets. The defendant has not realised that these are the snares that have come in his way to arrest his progress, the only real progress that should count for him. The illusion has taken hold of him so thoroughly that he has lost the sense to perceive what is the real and ultimate benefit for him: he has lost the sense of proportion which ought clearly to show to him what is eternal and what is ephemeral. Instead, we find that he mistakes his temporary sojourn on earth, which has all the appearance of reality to him, as his only life, devotes all his time and attention to the aggrandisement of this particular period, forgetting that he has really to get rid of this chimera of separateness from the Plaintiff. It is because his notions about truth are so clouded by the comforts and conveniences of the physical body, that not being able to see any distance away from him, his ideas regarding freedom and self-respect are warped. The few successes he may have had over the material world have evidently turned his head and he has mistaken the real scope of things. I have dwelt at some length on his mental attitude only to show that there is really no point in this contention of his. The relationship claimed by the Plaintiff does not in the least detract from the defendant's freedom or self-respect if those terms are understood in their proper sense. And on this it follows that there is nothing wrong with the validity thereof. The mistake lies with the defendant in his outlook; and in our opinion he will be well advised if he comes to a proper understanding of himself and his situation, and will not in future raise false and frivolous pleas which undermine his own individuality, on a false notion of what he considers to be public policy.

I therefore find on Issue 1 that the right claimed by the Plaintiff is true, valid and binding on the defendant.

Issue 2:—There will be a decree declaring the rights of the Plaintiff as prayed for, and for a perpetual injunction against the defendant by which the defendant, his heirs and descendants shall for ever and always be prohibited from acting in any way contrary to, or in derogation of, the rights of the Plaintiff in thought, word or deed.

I was prepared to give the Plaintiff His costs. but he did not ask for it; and taking into consideration the mental hallucination of the defendant which has made him put up a defence to this action, I direct that each party do bear his own costs.

Sri Ramanujacharya. J:—I agree in the decree proposed by my Lord. From some of his reasonings, however, I beg to differ, and though they have no material bearing on the result of the case, yet considering the vast importance of the question I should like to add a few words of my own. In my opinion the Upanishads filed as Exhibit-B place the case of the Plaintiff beyond doubt. In the view that my Lord the Chief Justice has taken of some of the expressions therein, he has felt some difficulty in coming to a conclusion. But as I understand them, they lay down and reiterate the existence of the very relationship which the Plaintiff claims in this suit. Exhibit-B proves beyond doubt the position contended for by the Plaintiff, viz., that the defendant is His property whom He can make or unmake. The defendant evidently in the disturbed state of his spiritual outlook has not realised the full force of his defence to this action; for he has given himself the most unenviable position of a soul-less body or an ownerless property. When in mundane parlance he could claim for his body freedom from the soul which inhabits it, he

could in spiritual parlance claim freedom for himself from the Plaintiff. In this view the question of adverse possession could not at all arise in the form propounded by the defendant: for he could at best prescribe only for a limited interest,—an interest with the very limitation which the Plaintiff seeks to enforce in this suit. The defendant does not realise that the institution of this very suit is an act of Grace on the part of the Plaintiff who feels impelled to do so because of the relationship He seeks to enforce. There is no reason why the Plaintiff should come to Court with a false case. In fact I was deeply touched to see the plight of the Plaintiff when He was giving evidence. The extreme solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the defendant and the supreme redemptive love that shone forth from His beautiful eyes then, still linger in my memory. His evidence left no doubt in my mind that He has instituted this action solely to avert the defendant's downfall: for He could well have rest content with the grateful allegiance and whole-hearted love which He gets from persons like His witnesses 2 and 3. But His large-hearted kindness and mercy evidently would give Him no rest till He had redeemed all human beings who dispute His Supremacy, like the defendant before us, and placed all of them on a pedestal with His loving devotees. Having given us the acharya-stana He has now graciously submitted this dispute for our judgment on the merits of the case, when He could easily have established His claim by an executive fiat. It only remains for me to add that the defendant, if he persists in his self-destructive policy of denying the only help and succour that can come to him, must be set right, and as members of a tribunal with unlimited powers, we feel impelled to give the Plaintiff a decree as He prays for, entirely in the interests of the defendant who is thereby saved from ruin. More than this no one can do. It rests with the defendant to realise

his position, and so realising, to brush aside all temporal power and pride, and embrace the one safe and sure method of further progress open to him, to wit, adhere to the Plaintiff as his only saviour.

Sri Madhvacharya, J.—I agree. It is preposterous on the face of it how the defendant could have engaged the attention of this Court with such a hopeless plea for such a length of time. There is neither merit nor law on his side. The only evidence he has let in is a tissue of falsehood and of self-contradictory statements; the only pleas he has raised are the outcome of a sheer spirit of bravado trying to hoodwink the Court with high-sounding phrases. He ought to have been content with his position. As to this, though I differ from my learned brothers as to its full scope and effect, I recognise the element of slavery and subservience of will in the defendant in regard to the Plaintiff. It is not based on absolute identity as my Lord the Chief Justice would have it, or on inseparable connection as my learned brother has put it, but on the ancient and immutable law of servitude of man to God. To deny it has been unheard of. The case leaves no doubt in my mind that the decree ought to be for the Plaintiff in the terms proposed by my Lord the Chief Justice.

DECREE FOR PLAINTIFF.

(Reported by Sri Parasara Bhatta)



III

SANKARA AND RAMANUJA

Is it a mere accident that Sankara and Ramanuja, two of the greatest Acharyas of South India, came into this world under the same constellation, and that their *Jayantis* or birthdays fall on the same day almost every year?

When one comes to think of it from the higher plane, is there any such thing as accident at all? To us, short-sighted men and women, who have not got the means of obtaining an all-comprehensive vision, so many occurrences appear to be accidents: but, viewed from the Omniscient's viewpoint, nothing can be an accident, and everything must be by design. The periods during which these two great Acharyas lived and taught are several centuries apart. One of them was very short-lived and the other lived up to a ripe old age. The doctrines preached by them, people are never tired of telling us, are very divergent. When we come to think for ourselves, however, the divergence is on a very few and rather unimportant points. One can never miss the purpose of the life and teachings of each of these two great Acharyas, and that purpose was one and the same. The difference in the doctrines promulgated by each has got to be evaluated in the proper historical perspective. It will then be found that the theory propounded by each was an answer to the problem that faced thinking humanity in the respective centuries.

When Sri Sankara came into the world, Buddhism held India in its grip. Buddhism itself was, we are told, a revolt against the abuses which are said to have come in the wake of the Vedic period. In the name of the Vedas and under the guise of the Yagnas ordained by the Vedas, cruelty and selfishness probably reigned supreme. Lord Buddha's purpose in

denying the validity and efficacy of the various sacrifices must have been only to protest against such excesses in the name of the Vedas. But, as often happens, the purpose of the doctrines enunciated by the Acharya was missed by his followers, and the later schisms based upon Buddha's doctrines were essentially destructive, and posited nothing but *Soonyam* or nothingness. Everything was denied. Even the Charwaka or the Materialist accepts the truth and validity of the world, though he denies them to God. The Madhyamika with his theory of *Soonyavada* denied everything, the world and God not excepted. It was at this juncture that Sankara came into the world. His birth, even as the birth of the Lord as laid down in the Gita, was for Dharma Samsthapana. An Acharya born in that period of the world's religious history could not succeed in establishing the validity of everything that had been denied.

The emphasis that Sri Sankara laid was, therefore, upon God or Brahman. The first and foremost thing was to establish the God who had been forced to hide Himself by the materialist and the Buddhist. Sri Sankara therefore took this up as his mission, and we all know how successfully he has accomplished it. His several works on Vedantic wisdom and religious experience are a monument to his great intellect, but for which God would have disappeared long ago from the minds of men. The swing of the pendulum now took it to the other extreme. Not only was Brahman affirmed and re-postulated, but as part of the same scheme, the validity of the world was denied. *Brahma Satyam* and *Jaganmithya*, together formed the essence of the doctrine that Sankara preached. Not only the man of to-day, but even God Himself, must be thankful to Sankara for having thus re-established His existence, though without name, form or attributes, in a world which had completely denied Him.

Several centuries later, Ramanuja came into the world. He was born in the year 1017 A. D. Sankara's doctrines had come in for a lot of criticism in the later years. When it is remembered that difference in *Mata* (system) is due to difference in *Mati* (intellect), it will easily be appreciated how a system or religious doctrine promulgated at one particular period in the history of the world may become unsuited to later periods, or untasty to later generations. The world is so much with us that a system of philosophy which denies its truth and validity does not fully satisfy. And as in all religions and in all matters, followers can by their half-hearted or ununderstanding following, destroy the greatness of a system. The need was, therefore, felt centuries after the disappearance of Sankara, for a re-statement of the advaitic or monistic view, which was established by him with such great polemic facility. Ramanuja was able to give a more satisfying view, in one sense, of the term "advaita". Very cleverly utilising the analogy of the Sareera and the Sareeri (body and soul) which the Upanishads in one portion unambiguously posit as the relationship between the world and God, Ramanuja evolved a system of organic unity, which later began to be called Visishtadvaita. The one-ness is there, but it is there without prejudice to the multiplicity or *nana*. The world, sentient and non-sentient, is as true as God or Brahman; only it depends on God for its sustenance, activity, and enjoyment. Chetana-chetana-visishta Brahman was, therefore, posited as the One without a second. All the Sruti texts are thus harmonised, and in this synthetic and organic unity of the world and Brahman, there is a coalescence of the varying principles and doctrines contained in various Sritis and Sutras. With a synthetic genius and synoptic vision all his own, Ramanuja evolved a theory which is satisfying to that section of the intellectual world which found difficulty in understanding and following the interpretations placed on the texts of the Sruti by Sankara. Sankara's system

is known as Advaita and Ramanuja's system as Visishtadwaita. Sri Madhvacharya, the third of the stalwart Acharyas in this part of the country, with equal facility established the validity of plurality. His system, as is well known, is the Dwaita Vedanta.

The common man of to-day does not take to *Brahma-jignasa* because of, or after, a study of the Vedas. The intricate methods employed by the great religious Acharyas of yore to establish either the Advaita or the Dwaita or the Visishtadwaita systems are not the real things that matter to the average man of today. It is, therefore, vain for him to spend all his time upon the polemic methods employed in days when Vedic research and scholarship were at a premium. Here are three systems; each one of them being perfect in itself and to the extent it goes, and quite satisfying to its votary. Our religious proclivities are determined by so many circumstances, such as birth, education, environment, etc. It is, therefore, up to every one of us to see the underlying harmony and unity in all the systems, and though each one of us may follow only one, there is nothing to prevent a perception and appreciation of similar thoughts and ideas and ways of thinking in other systems.

In my humble opinion, enough emphasis has been laid upon diversity between the several schools of Vedantic thought. The nation is now passing through a crisis and if it is to emerge out of it safe and secure in the matter of philosophic thought and religious conduct all *Asthikas* should take to the study of unity and to deliberately forget diversity, even when it is shown to them by interested persons.

Taking the two Acharyas whose Jayantis synchronise and fall on the same day, both of them are believers in Iswara's mercy and Guruprasada or the blessings of an Acharya. The keenest of *Nirguna-Brahma-Vadins* concedes the efficacy of *Saguna-*

Brahman. In *Upasana* or worship, the *Saguna-Brahman* of the Advaitin and the "Srinivasa" of the Visishtadwaitin are one. The Murti worshipped maybe different, as it is sure to be between man and man, even among followers of the same cult of Vedanta. But the aim is one and the same. The Tatva, the Hita and the Purushartha are practically the same to the Visishtadwaitin and to the Advaitin in regard to the practice of religion. Need we, therefore, think of the differences in the ultimate reality, and drift each from the other to the point of disputations? Can we not agree not to stress the ultimate differences and divergences, but to join in one common worship of God?

It is up to every thoughtful man and woman in India to do everything possible for the attainment of a state of blending and harmony among religious-minded people, which alone will conduce to the welfare of future generations of our countrymen. This does not mean at all that anyone of us is called upon to give up his own inclinations and observances. Without prejudice to the observance of each, it is possible to have common view-points emphasised in common meetings. Every family consists of several members with different tastes, but are they not all members of one household? Sankara and Ramanuja have, by having a common Jayanthi for themselves, shown that their aim is not in favour of difference and differentiation, but in favour of unity and synthesis.



IV

WEEPING FOR GOD.

(The Value of Rodhana [Weeping] In Spiritual Life).

One of the methods invariably resorted to by the weak and the impotent for the attainment of their heart's desire is weeping. The fresh-born babe before it knows anything of the world knows a good deal about weeping as a weapon of great usefulness. The weeping of the wife is her strongest argument before which the sternest of husbands will quail, however strong he may feel when it comes to a matter of closely reasoned argumentation. Weeping excites sympathy, disarms opposition, and goes a long way in securing the desired object from the hands of the unwilling giver. It is also designed by nature to indicate pain and the existence of suffering. Instinctively a man in distress weeps, and it is only by the greatest restraint imposed on oneself on considerations of the vulgarity involved in the exhibition of emotions, that weeping is stifled where the individuality is strong and unbending. Weeping also comes as a solace to the man in desperate circumstances. He finds a relief in shedding tears and sobbing away his woes. He takes to weeping instinctively as it were. In his overstrung state it suggests itself as a relief and a remedy.

No wonder then that the seekers after God also weep and wail a great deal. They feel incomplete without God who is the Object of their love: they feel desolate and forlorn when they think that they have been abandoned by their God in a wilderness of suffering and sorrow: they feel deeply distressed at their helpless plight; they are daily in mortal dread of the temptations and allurements of the material world which threaten to drag them away from their spiritual path. Experiencing all these and several other kindred sensations of fear and insecurity, they wring out their hearts in grief and break out into rhapsodies of weeping,

which are as beautiful in their melody as they are striking in their desolate-ness. The songs and psalms of the devout men of yore are nothing but a musical record of the wailing of their souls in the fulness of their longing and the poignancy of their yearning for a God whom they loved, worshipped, and sought after. Intense dissatisfaction at their present state, and a keen aspiration to true spiritual greatness shook these devotees to the very foundation of their beings, and the result is a series of sobbing songs sung out of sheer agony of the soul.

It is only the materially-minded and sordid man-of-the-world, who does not feel the existence of a spirit behind and beyond the matter that meets the eye., that can be satisfied with his present state, and be content with mere animal existence. He may be troubled by unfulfilled desires and thwarted ambitions in material life, but he is not worried by spiritual wants and longings of which he knows nothing. But there are others who out of their faith have postulated a God and have made it their pleasure to love Him, their duty to do His behest, and their purpose to reach Him. They are not satisfied with their present lot; they are not content with their present existence. Their soul clamours for a beatific union or a coalescing unity with their God, and they will know no satisfaction, nor find any comfort, till they attain their ultimate goal and end, God. It is these disappointed devotees, and disquieted seekers that have specialised in the art of weeping and have left to us a large legacy of laments, portraying their divine discontentment.

The loudness of the lament is in direct proportion to the intensity of the longing that prompts you to weep. If you feel like a fish out of water you are sure to writhe in agony till you are thrown back into the water, or till you die. If you feel only lukewarm in

your desolation, then you simply moan in a low tone about your woes. In the course of a man's spiritual progress, a certain amount of sick-mindedness is a necessary stage. It must of course not be of the type that develops into cynicism or drifts into atheism. A dispassionate contemplation of the futility of human endeavour is an absolute pre-requisite for spiritual stability. In other words, as soon as a discriminating dissection of our ways of life discloses to us what we really are and have been, and what we really ought to be, *Nirveda*, or remorse, is an invariable sensation that results out of the introspection. This *nirveda* causes the first weeping. When we take stock of our past life, nothing is left to us but to exclaim: அஹோ மே மஹதி யாதா நிஷ்பலா ஜம்மந்ததி: (What a long series of lives on lives have been wasted by me) ஊமனார் கண்ட கனலிலும் பழுதாய் ஒழிந்தன கழிந்த அந் நாட்கள் (The days that are past have gone away like the dreams of a dumb man, useless and unexpressed). Like the water that has flown down a river, those days are no more to be, and there is no possibility of redeeming them from the lap of the past. This feeling of lost chances is so bitter that one of the Alwars has cried out "பழுதே பல பகலும் போயின என்று அஞ்சி அழுதேன்" (I wept in sheer dread that all the several days that are past have been spent to no purpose). After we have wept out this feeling and risen chastened out of it—without getting disheartened by the alluring argument: 'when so many lives have been spent in sin, where is the spiritual chance hereafter?'—we make a big effort to be pure in the future, and to learn to pine for the God Whom we have so long forgotten.

Here again the feeling of our smallness and His greatness oppresses and depresses us; and we are forced to break out with a broken heart "அவன் எவ்விடத்தான் யான் ஆர்?". "Where is He. and what am I?". Here is the second lament,—on the unworthiness of the individual soul,—laden with past sins and full of potentiality for future sins,—to realise the pure and

blemish-less God. The failure to qualify for true spiritual greatness in the past was the first cause of grief: the incapacity to qualify for it in the present is the second cause, and a more disquieting one. This feeling is also in turn wept out. Wide reading and deep reflection on the Lord's abounding *Saulabhya* (approachability) and abiding Grace, dispel all fears born out of inequality, and it is realised that with all His greatness, God is not quite unapproachable, since He is always amenable to love or *Bhakti* (பத்துடை அடியவர்க்கு எளி யவன்).

But how to love Him? Love for the pleasures of the senses we have. But love for God who is *Ateendriya* or beyond the senses,—how are we to acquire it? We are not accustomed to that sort of love, and how are we going to cultivate it? Sri Kuresa, known also as Alwan, beautifully bemoans this unfitness for God-love. "I have got a large desire", says he, "for all the pleasures of the body, but none whatever for Your Feet. My mind is every moment tormented by diverse things such as disease, poverty, want of joy, getting things I do not desire, not getting things I hanker after, and my irritating inferiority-complex; but never once have I been worried by the thought that I do not bear any love to Thee" An Alwar says, "I have not a single qualification in me that can lead me to God-love, and still like a blind man I grope in the dark for a God Whom my untutored heart longs to love". Lust is of the flesh, but love is of the spirit. A gracious God ever watchful of His devotees' interests hears this wail, and fills the heart of the sincere devotees, who can thus cry out in agony and despair, out of their deep and abiding love towards His Feet.

Then comes the next stage in the lament of the soul, which is now charged with an intense love and yearning towards God, Who has now been understood to be the repository of all goodness and grace. And now begins the game of hide-and-seek between the lover

and the object of the love, between the seeker and the sought. The soul in its newly taught love hankers for, and rushes after, God, to fulfil itself. But God eludes, for He thinks that the love is not yet keen enough to merit fulfilment. But the individual soul feels as if it would burst with this unfulfilled love. The love grows and grows; easily outgrows the body; then it outgrows the world and the seas and all the spheres; then it outgrows the feeling soul itself; then it envelops the beloved object itself, GOD, than whom nothing can be bigger. And thus enveloped and belittled by the all-consuming love of the Jiva, which has now grown to cosmic proportions, God yields Himself up to the delectation and enjoyment of the sincere devotee, who has wept and wept, and whipped up his love from the smallest size to the biggest possible. The stages in the growth of love here described appear short, but Nammalwar who has clearly marked them out in his songs had to wail and weep through over a thousand stanzas with emotion and fervour, before this God-enveloping love was vouchsafed to him. But such is the potency of weeping for God that a small child under a tamarind tree was able to outgrow in love the big *Brahman* by the sheer strength of its loud lamentations in the ecstasy of an unfulfilled love felt for the lotus Feet of the Lord, who was made to feel that even a remote Paramapada is not secure from the reach of the loud notes of a languishing and agonised soul below, pining away in love and crying aloud for the fulfilment of that love. Nammalwar's songs especially those of the Tiruvoimozhi are the best exponents of this cult of weeping as a method of God-attainment. Among the Saivite Saints Manikkavachakar has won the distinctive title of அழுது அழுது அடியடைந்தவர் - or one who reached God by the strength of his weeping. He has prescribed weeping as a means for attaining God. அழுதால் அவனைப் பெறலாமே.

This does not mean that weeping as a means to God-realisation is unknown in the great Sanskrit

Epics and Puranas, and that it is to be found only in Tamil culture. *Srimad Ramayana* has been somewhere pertinently summarised as half-weeping and half-forest. Like all half-truths this remark is not without justification. For, a perusal of that mighty epic will convince anyone that those who weep for God-realisation get it as certainly as, and perhaps more quickly than, those who pursue the time-honoured method of winning their spiritual freedom by the slow process of Karma, Gnana, and Bhakti. If there are any two characters in the *Srimad Ramayana* who could be said to have pined away out of love for Sri Rama, they are Bharatha and Sita. And Valmiki has set apart two out of his six Kandas proper for their lamentations, one for each; Ayodhyakanda for Bharatha, who could weep in the Durbar Hall *Vilalapa Sabha-madhye*, and Sundarakanda for Sita, who could flood an *Asoka-vana* with the tears of her *soka* (grief).

It is not the case with the *Ramayana* alone. *Srimad Bhagavatham* illustrates the potency of weeping even more markedly. The illiterate and untutored Gopis who knew nothing but the dictates of their hearts, and pursued no policy other than the bent of their desires, felt considerably grieved over their separation from the bewitching Sri Krishna Who had hidden Himself from them, taking away their hearts with Him. Their misery and affliction at not finding Sri Krishna in their midst take a most melodious form, and people to this day refer to their lamentation by the name *Gopika Gita*. They first sang in praise of the eluding Lord who had forsaken them; then they fell to weeping discordantly; ultimately they began to wail without words and set up a cry which proved effective. Sukha Maharishi who tells the story of their agonised cries describes them thus; *Iti Gopyaha-pragaayan-tyaha pralapantyacha-chitrada-ruruduhu-su-swaram*. And closely following this sweet *Rodhana* and in answer to it, there is *Avirbhava* or appearance, and the Lord

presents Himself before the weeping Gopis, a thousand-fold more beautiful and more enchanting than before. *Taasaam Avirabhoot Saurihi*. Here the Maharishi shows how *Rodhana* can successfully compel the appearance of God Who is said to be so difficult to see or attain. As an eminent Pandit pointed out while commenting on these slokas, it looks as if this same ease and certainty of God's grace which *Rodhana* is able to attract, have not been vouchsafed to *Vedana* or knowledge. The claims of a devout Bhakta like Akrura and a pious Sage like Uddhava, who also seek the Lord in the fulness of their wisdom or Gnana, appear to be postponed to the clamorous and loud insistence with which the Gopis assail the Lord of their ignorant hearts. The reason is not far to seek, The Grace of the Lord is called வருத்தம் பொரு அருள். It is said to be intolerant of sorrow or affliction in the loving devotee. The disciplined devotion of Akrura and Uddhava could brook testing, and their patience could put up with delay. But the Gopis in the intensity of their passion for a God who had captivated their hearts would have sung themselves to death, and wept themselves to annihilation, if then and there they did not secure the Object of their love.

Arjuna furnishes another proof of the fact that with the arising of grief in the devotee, there arises Grace in the Lord. The eighteen chapters of the Bhagavat Gita are only an answer to the grief that arose in the heart of Arjuna who became *Soka-samvignamanasaha*; for as Sanjaya says, the Lord delivered Himself of the Gita only in answer to a disheartened Arjuna with eyes filled with tears and mind torn asunder by *Vishada*: (Gita II (i)) As explanations are furnished and positions made clear, Arjuna changes the ground of his grief. The initial sorrow at having to mercilessly mow down his own relatives in war, yields place to grief at his own spiritual lowliness and weakness, and that in turn is ultimately transformed into

abject misery at not being able to reach the God Who stands within the reach of his hand, and yet eludes him so completely. It is in answer to this *Charama Soka* or Ultimate Grief that the *Charma Sloka* or the Last Word in God-attainment has been given to the world. The mercy of the Lord could not brook the sight of the misery which was depicted in Arjuna's face when he listened to the difficult directions set out in the penultimate Sloka beginning with *Manmūṇa-bhava*; and at the mere sight of his pitiable plight, the flood-gates of the Lord's Grace were opened, and not only Arjuna, but the whole race of grieving humanity, who are out to reach Him, has been deluged by that Divine out-pour of Mercy Grace and Love. The words *Ma-Suchaha* 'Do not grieve' have been addressed from the Charioteer's Seat in Arjuna's Car to the whole of humanity who crave for the Lord's company, hanker for his Grace, and pine away in love.

Based on this Declaration of Divine Dispensation there has arisen a new cult,—the cult of Prapatti or Self-gift. The first and foremost qualification for this Surrender or Self-gift is the feeling of unutterable woe and dire helplessness. *Aakinchinya* or the realisation of self-nothing-ness is a *sine qua non* for *prapatti*. One must feel one's desolateness in all its aspects, and comprehend the full significance of one's spiritual solitariness. He must realise that he is alone,—absolutely alone in this huge and vast world with nothing and no one, not even himself, to rely on, except God. The sense of solitariness must be forced upon him to such an extent that he can clearly see his soul in its naked helplessness, when the encasing body, and not merely friends and relatives, is cast off, and it is left to march out on its lonely quest after God. The sense of his weakness must be so deeply realised that what will be left to him here below is only to weep and weep, even as a Sita imprisoned in Lanka wept

(*Lanka-ruddha-Videha-raja-tanaya-nyayena laalapyate*) or as a Nammalwar who felt that he had been banished from God's grace and tied up in a prison. It is only such intense grief that can provoke and invoke the Grace of the Lord, for He is not an unwise Being to waste His love on those who do not want Him, however much He may feel compassionate towards them. The words *Maa-suchaha* clearly indicate that the person to whom they are addressed is afflicted and depressed by a consuming grief from which nothing but the Lord's assurance can uplift him. If however, the seeming devotee lulls his conscience by the thought that the Lord is *Dosha-bhogyā* or a lover of sins, and that therefore his very sins will save him, or if he hypocritically says that as God's Kataksha or Grace is *Nirhetuka*, i. e., is not conditioned by any effort of the devotee, and thereby gets confirmed in his spiritual indolence, no God can or will save him. God is certainly *Dosha-bhogyā* and loves His true Devotees with all their faults. He is certainly an *Avyajā Vatsala*, and gives of His love for no recompense or return. But He must and will be satisfied that there is true love or craving in the *upāsaka* towards Him, and that it is not a lip-deep avowal, having its root in indolence, hypocrisy and sinfulness, with never the slightest pang of grief or remorse in the heart. To say that a Vasishta or a Vamadeva pursuing the path of Bhaktiyoga is rejected and preference is accorded to a pretending prapanna, who gloats over his sins as his saviours, and revels in his ignorance and indolence with a covert sneer and an ill-concealed contempt for spiritual effort and spiritual endeavour, may be a catching system; but it cannot be true. God rewards the *prapanna* sooner because of the intense and consuming desire of his that cries for quick realisation. It has been truly remarked that *prapatti* is more severe and difficult than Bhakti. God must be made to feel that nothing but His saving Grace can put an end to

the Mumukshu's inconsolable affliction, born of love towards Him, and seeking for final and early fulfilment in Him. Till that stage is reached wherein love finds response, and desire gets satisfaction, man has got to go on weeping, wailing, sorrowing, bemoaning, and lamenting, tearing out his heart in misery and in despair. And not till the Glory of God has settled on him, and he has been gathered to the breast of his Beloved, and folded within the loving embrace of the Divine Arms, can this weeping cease, and yield place to the endless ecstasy of the Mukta, rejoicing in the company of the Lord, revelling in the Beauty of His Form, and rhapsodying in the highest Bliss of Divine Communion.



V

NEITHER HERE NOR THERE.

Nammalvar in one of his soul-stirring stanzas bemoans his lot thus: அங்குற்றேனல்லேன்; இங்குற்றேனல்லேன்; உன்னைக் காணும் அவாவில் வீழ்ந்து யான் எங்குற்றேனுமல்லேன்.” “I am not of those chosen few up above, gifted to be with Thee and by Thy side for ever and ever; nor am I of those who spend a happy contented life over here, without any trouble or fear about a life or lives beyond. Tormented by a passion to obtain a vision of Thee I am neither here, nor there, nor anywhere.” (Tiruvoimozhi V. vii. 2) This will truly describe the state of many of us here who have not the courage to be godly and the strength of purpose to be saintly, but who at the same time are not thoughtless enough to mix freely with the world at large with all its temptations and allurements. Wordly-mindedness that has been with us for ages and lives untold will not let go its ancient hold on us, and so the clinging to the flesh and all that the flesh is heir to is present in us in a pronounced degree. At the same time, a little intellect, a few spiritual flashes vouchsafed to us now and then by a merciful God and an environment of religious-ness not entirely of our seeking, have worked serious havoc with our materialistic stability and equilibrium. And hence we are very often tossed between this extreme and that, and as frequently deadened by a morbid feeling of inertia and helplessness.

The mentality of people whose spiritual craving is so highly marked that they can look down upon the world and tell them: யூயம் யூயம் வயம் வயம் “You are you and we shall remain we” and நாஸ்தி ஸங்கதிஸ் மாகம் புஷ்மாகம்ச பரஸ்பாம் “There is nothing in common between you and ourselves” is nothing strange in our country which has pronounced genius for religion. From the earliest times men have not been wanting

who could discard all the pleasures that the world can afford, and concentrate their every endeavour on the attainment of a God for whom every cell and pore in their body clamour. God was to them the very breath of their nostrils. "All is Vasudeva" was their motto and one of them went so far in the application of this doctrine as to say that he ate God, drank God and chewed God. (Tiruvoimozhi, VI. vii. 1.) God was thus the sustainer, the feeder and the pleasure-giver. The world had no terrors for them. It could not wean them from their set pursuit after God. Like Prahlada and Vamadeva they could feel their oneness with God to such an extent that they regarded this world, sentient as well as non-sentient, as another and bigger part of themselves. Whatever is, is God to them. Their God-hunger is so marked that it amounts to a vital organic craving and not a mere passing desire for something which catches the fancy for the moment. Their whole life is a dedication, a great Yajna or Sacrifice as depicted in the closing Mantra of the Taittiriya Upanishad. To them it matters not whether they are on earth encased in a body, or, having become disembodied, are planted safe and secure in a Paramapada. Wherever they are, they are Muktas.

On the other side we have got the man of the world to whom God and godly life are sealed books, who with a vigour and earnestness of appalling intensity pursues the pleasures of the world and has rarely experienced rest, peace, or contentment. The very hankering for pleasures new and unenjoyed furnishes a thrill which gives a zest to life. The more he gets of pleasure the more he wants of it. And even if he has never tasted pleasure he hankers for it all the more keenly; for as long as there is life there is hope. Life is now measured by the gathering in of maximum enjoyment with minimum endeavour. Just as your God's good man obeys the dictates of his God,

so does this votary of materialism implicitly and unfailingly obey the dictates of his senses. What pleases the eye or the ear or any other sense as being beautiful must be sought after. If the man of God says "I am Thine", the man of the world says "The whole world is mine". Competition, restlessness and haste are inevitable. Each man's pleasure alone counts and if perchance he has to dislodge another from his legitimate share of pleasure, it has got to be done. Might is right, and the race is to the powerful. There is no time for this type of man to waste on pursuing phantoms such as God, goodness or virtue. They are all the lazy inventions of sick-minded persons whose self-respect and self-reliance are at an ebb. To acknowledge a power higher than yours is a confession of weakness, which no strong-minded and sensible man ought to be guilty of. Honesty is only a best policy. If before such a man God wants to present Himself, He must do so as a Providence, providing for his material welfare and creature-comforts and assuring him success in all his varied pursuits after animal pleasure. A God who can promise to give him wealth, fame, and worldly security will easily be tolerated; but he will be spurned aside the moment He shows himself to be a Being who commands and demands obedience. Such a man's conscience is easily satisfied by making the offer of a few coconuts but cannot think complacently of doing anything more for a God who showers His gifts on him. In the scheme of things and in the breathlessness of life God cannot appropriate anything except a very limited space and more limited time. Religion is nothing but a bargaining with God; and to give religion a higher place in life than that is to develop a morbid mentality which is a serious menace to business and profit. It is a great relief not to be bothered in mind by imagined terrors of other lives and of the inexorable law of Karma.

Here are the two types, and as I think of them I feel convinced that I belong to neither of them. My

ambition is to be of the former, but my tendencies are entirely with the latter. The peace and serenity of the godly are not mine; at the same time something in me refuses to permit me to go into raptures about the mentality of the godless. While I am not able to develop the yearning for God, I am at the same time unwilling to increase the hankering after matter. There is fascination in me for the sense-pleasures, which I am not able to repel, just as there is a longing in me to belong to the rank of the godly, which I am not able to attain.

Truly a most unenviable lot to befall anyone! The conflict arising every moment in me out of the co-existence of these incompatible elements makes me very uncomfortable. Every moment I am dragged between this state and that state, and have to argue each side of the matter and come to a judgment myself unaided by anyone else; for who can solve for me what I cannot solve for myself? The spirit says "Look up"; but the flesh pulls my eyes down. As Alwan says, "The desire in me for the pleasures of the senses is mighty, while there is not even a spark of desire towards God's feet." And as Alwar says, it is the desire for God that leads to all this disquiet and discomfort. If I am not aware of the higher state, then perforce I can find no fault or flaw in the lower. But what little I have read, heard, and seen, of truly religious men has made it impossible for me to look on material welfare as the ultimate aim of a thoughtful soul. And hence the trouble and the problem.

But where is the solution, or the dissolution? For some people are lucky enough to dissolve some problems which they cannot solve. They deny the existence of the problem or argue it away. I am not able to do that; for the problem of spirit is too much with me for that; at least, so I flatter myself. I cannot shut out the God who ever dwells in my heart and

occasionally peeps out and vouchsafes to me a strange and beatific bliss. My intellect is not able to argue Him away, and my heart is not able to forget Him. If ninety-nine heart-beats of mine are recorded for matters pertaining to sense pleasure, at least the hundredth beat has up so far been recorded by my faithful and grateful heart to my God. And even if my mind fails and my heart forgets, He, my loving God, never fails, or forgets. Through one sense or another He enters into me and bathes my glad heart with the ineffable bliss of His embrace, even like a fond lover; and in that one moment I rise to such a spiritual height that even my problem appears to be solved and I am able to feel there is no fear for me. It is because such moments are few and far between that I feel despondent and have to cry out my soul in agony, tormented by the trouble of having to be between a sweet God on the one side and malicious matter on the other. There is no more any question of choice for me. My mind and my heart have already chosen my God for me and keep on before me His Beauty; Mercy and Love to help me in my crying moments. But what I am yet to achieve is the co-operation of my senses in this attunement to, and at-one-ment with, my God. I am not at all satisfied with my senses paying obeisance to my Lord once in a way, and am anxious to turn them and their bent now and at once entirely towards my God. My ambition is that my every thought, my every word and my every deed should be an offering of homage and love towards Him who has given, and is giving, me more pleasure than all the things that the earth can offer. And my whole fear is thus centered in my senses,—those five horses yoked to my existence and which, try how I might to rein them in, gallop out fast and full towards material pleasures. My one complaint against my God, if ever I am heard to complain against Him, is that He has not given my hands sufficient strength to check these hitherto unbroken horses

in their mad career, and to drive them safely and peacefully towards the land wherein His Beautiful Feet shine in all their Effulgence and Glory, holding out Bliss and Love to all who reach there.

I would not be quite honest and just to myself if I do not put down here an attempted solution which I have found in my mind for this problem of godly love *versus* material lust. As I said before, it is my senses that give trouble. I have no quarrel with my mind, which has postulated a God firmly and unshakably, or with my heart; which has ever been willing to love the God which my mind has shown to it. My senses alone persist in continuing to gather the pleasures of earth and prevent me from attaining godliness of the true sort. They do not permit me to cultivate that *Virakti* or *Vairagya* for the sense-born pleasures, which is a precursor of God-love. "He who has a desire for God must have renounced the desire for what is not God." There is no question of these two things existing side by side. Each is destructive of the other, and in the race I am afraid that the intensity of my sense-pleasures will vanquish the reasoning of my mind and the dictates of my heart towards God. Quelling of the senses by appeasing their appetite is out of the question. It is like trying to put out fire by heaping fuel on it. The only thing I can think of is to turn these senses towards God, as I am unable to put them out of action. In other words, I aim at the enjoyment of all the sense-pleasures in relation to God. In this way I hope to hold out to the tendencies and *vasanas* of my Indriyas the alluring sensation of God-born love, and request them to reject earth-born lust, which has now such a powerful hold over them. And if I should only be helped herein by my God, I have no doubt that very soon my senses would have thrown aside their carnal instincts and taken to the higher regions of God-love. Without losing any of their thrills they can find complete

fulfilment in a God who can satisfy their every desire and quench their every thirst. The method, of course, is modelled after that of the Gopis of the Srimad Bhagavatam, who had their own sense-torments but were fortunate enough to have at hand the divine Personality of God Himself, who was willing to be the target for their sensuous onslaughts. By a touch of that divine Alchemist all their lower desires and baser passions became transmuted into spiritual yearning, and they have come to occupy a high place among devotees in spite of their lack of learning. I am, I admit, presumptuous enough to think that, if my God grant, I may yet achieve the same state by sublimating my Kama, which is now *vishaya-kama* into *Bhagavat-kama*. Then my joys and hopes and passions will all be centered in Him, and no more will there be any fall or failure for me. That divine Song sung by the Celestial Parrot, Sukha, (VII. i. 30), "Gopyah-kaamaat" has emboldened me to take this stand and claim to attain God-love because I have got strong material love. The strength of my material love will be my strength when the sublimation is safely effectuated and the floodgates of my passions are diverted no more into the baser valleys of earthly desire but into the serene channels of ethereal love,

Solution, however, is not realization, and my soul quivers with dread when it contemplates the difficulty of making this a veritable personal *anubhava* instead of a mere intellectual theory. And here more than ever, do I beseech the co-operation and blessing of my loving Lord. For it is up to Him to see that my senses are attracted towards Him, and find in Him a complete answer and fulfilment for all their proclivities. If He leaves me in the lurch, and permits to be brought before my senses the thousand distractions that can easily lead me away from Him, my ruin is wrought. If however He is kind enough to dispel those distractions by the sweetness of His own attraction, if He will but disclose His Beauty and drive away

the ugliness of life, and seduce my soul away from its sinful propensity, I am saved, and will not thenceforward mind where I am. For, to the beloved of the Lord. to whom the Lord's love is assured, nay vouchsafed, what matters it where he is situate? Wherever he is, he will see only the fair vision of divine Beauty, and hear only the rapturous notes of the celestial flute played by those sweet little hands, conveying through the ear to the heart of the listener the Lord's own message of hope, courage and LOVE.



VI

JEEVANMUKTI

It was Shelley who wrote "Die if thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek". But the experiences and the teachings of the great Srivaishnavite Saints are to the contrary. To the true lover of God whose love is truly reciprocated, departure from this world and from this body is not essential for the realisation of spiritual bliss. Encased in this material body, and surrounded by this material world, with all that it means in the way of temptations and allurements, he still finds it possible to realise the fulfilment of his soul and to reach the goal of his spiritual endeavour. Nothing daunted by his physical shortcomings and his material surroundings, he is able to centre his mind in God and convert this world, so far as he is concerned, into a Paramapada.

The word Jeevanmukti has been usually used only in the case of Adwaitic realisation. In fact it is an Adwaitic term. The Visishtadwaitins think in terms of *Videhamukti* which involves the notion of an *Utkranti*, a rising up, and a departure to a *Divya Desa* or Celestial Region. Still I have always felt that the term Jeevanmukti can well and properly be applied to the Vaishnavite mentality which when it breaks into rhapsody, sings in the following strain: "What is there wrong or low in my continuing in this life, if my beautiful lotus-eyed Lord so grant that my mouth shall always utter His ever-increasing greatness and glory my mind be ever filled by His rapturous and seductive Form, and my hands be unceasingly engaged in offering the choicest flowers at His divine Feet?" (Tiruvoimozhi VIII. x. 4)

Mukti by itself means only release, release from the sorrows of life: but to all theists this term connotes not only the negative aspect of freedom from sorrow and

pain, but also the positive aspect of association with God in some form or other. If in this very life it were possible to attain this association with God in such a manner and to such an extent that the physical encumbrances and material surroundings cease to count, and are unable to make themselves felt, a state is attained which may be equated with Moksha. To minimise the wants and cravings of the flesh is certainly a feat, but it is a feat which has been accomplished in no mean degree by not a few of our saints. Once that is done and the body is put aside except for the bare mechanical continuance of its existence in an involuntary way, taking up no thought and engaging no attention of the indwelling soul, a vast progress is made towards the attainment of Mukti. The mind in the meanwhile by proper study and reflection gets rooted in God to such an extent that God is known and felt to be the source and sustenance of the individual soul. By the triple process of metaphysical cogitation, moral conduct and mystic contemplation, the at-one-ment with God is completely achieved. When the receptacle is thus in a thoroughly fit state, the ineffable bliss of God pours from above; and when the two meet, the yearning love of the individual soul for God, and the gracious love of God for the individual soul, then there comes that union and that unity at which all the spheres rejoice, as in Tiruvoimozhi, X. ix. 1.

The individual soul, it is true has not yet cast off its body which still ties it down to the material plane. But the centre of its existence has been shifted from itself to God. The Ptolemaic theory has given place to the Copernican theory and it is now deeply realized and fully felt that our centre is outside us. When it was shown that the earth was not the centre about which the rest of the planets and stars revolved, but was itself a microscopic speck revolving along one of several circumferences round another centre, then there came a revolution in the astronomical and scientific world. The shifting of the centre is so full of meaning

and significance. The same process applies to the evolution of the individual soul. The individual soul is made to realise that the physical world, the animal world, the rest of mankind, the starry firmament above, and the warring elements below have not all been created for its pleasure and well-being, but that along with it (the individual soul) they are all revolving round one and the same centre,—God. And as concentric circles can never touch one another, clash and conflict cannot occur. Once this is understood in all its aspects and significance, there is no more any trouble. The individual existence is no more in conflict with the cosmic existence. The daily motion of the planet round its own axis together with its own moons and satellites is quite consistent with its annual motion round the sun. The individual being has gravitated towards the Supreme Being and in that very gravitation, it finds its source, sustenance and satisfaction.

This is the state which, as I started by saying, can be equated with Mokshananda or the Bliss of the Ascended Celestials, who are in Vaishnavite literature designated by the term "Nityasoores". On attaining this earthly-unearthly state, the individual soul feels all the security and all the bliss that are usually understood to be the lot of the Mukta, and thinks that this state is itself Moksha and not merely a pale foretaste of it. Nay, in the first flush it even feels that this stage is far higher and sweeter and more difficult of attainment than Moksha itself. Nammazhwar is among those who claim for this (what I call) Jeevan-mukta state greater excellence than for the state of Moksha in Paramapada (*Vide* Peria Tiru Andadi, Verses 51 and 79).

Where there is no war there can be no victory. The Mukta in Paramapada has no senses (Indriyas) to grapple with every moment of his existence, and it is no wonder that in such a place he will be having a

very easy time of it, – dwelling in God. But to the Mukta here below must be paid the highest tribute of having achieved what is well nigh impossible to the myriads of other mortals, of having quelled the warring activities of the five foes (the five *gnanendriyas* clamouring for satisfaction), and synchronised and synthesised them into divine at-one-ness. For as Parakala has aptly remarked, when it is difficult to appease the hunger of one Indriya (sense organ), what is to be said of five eternal indwelling tormentors?

Andal (Goda) in one of her lovely lyrics puts the question கோலிந்தற்கோர் குற்றேவல் இம்மைப் பிறனி செய்யாதே இனிப்போய்ச் செய்யும் தவம்தான் என்? (Nachiar Tirumozhi, XIII. 9.) In the absence of realisation here and in this life, of what use is the talk of bliss in a life or lives to come? A bird in the hand is certainly worth many more in the bush. Here we are, blessed with a thoughtful and feeling life, unlike myriads on myriads of souls which are dragging on their miserable existence in unthinking animal and bird bodies. If, here and now, God, whom we so eagerly long after, cannot vouchsafe to us the sweetness of His company and the rapture of His enjoyment, a fig for the hereafter, the problematical uncertain hereafter, of which we can be sure only by the strength of our faith and not by any positive proof of the senses! When one can get enough food from out of sure *terra firma* why go after the winged denizens of the air முயல்விட்டுக் காக்கைப்பின் போவதே (Siriya Tirumadal.) It is only the mad man that will permit life to drip eventless through his fingers and fix his longing and lingering gaze on what the life beyond is supposed to provide.

Arguments such as these have strongly appealed to the God-intoxicated mystics of Vaishnavism and they have sung accordingly. Many of them have not hesitated to whittle down the pleasures attainable in

Vaikunta. In fact, very often in a comparison, Paramapada-Vaikunta stands very much below Bhooloka-Vaikunta. அச்சுவை பெறிலும் வேண்டேன். I don't want it, says one mystic. நல்கீடு பெறிலும் கொள்ளுவதெண்ணுமோ? I would not think of having it, says another. In one of these 'drunken' moods of of spiritual bliss, Azhwar interrogates God Himself thus: "To me who regard you as my food, my drink and my joy, what have you to give in return for my unceasing love?" "Vaikunta" says the Lord, "is my supreme possession and nothing higher have I got to bestow on you." The Azhwar rejoins "Do you think that that Vaikunta is sweeter than the mind of your devotee deeply lodged in your goodness, greatness and grace? Why, if it were so, have you yourself discarded your lofty seat in that Vaikunta and come to dwell permanently in our hearts?" This conversation is but one of the many in which these Azhwars, immersed in the deluge of divine bliss, indulge pretty often.

To the unsympathetic critic, to the heart-less intellectual, to the dry-as-dust metaphysician, and to the matter-of-fact moralist, it is very easy to have a fling at this ecsatic state of God-intoxication, which they can't in their dullness distinguish from other intoxications. To the intellectual scoffer, and the ethical prude, mysticism is always a sealed book. They can never taste of its sweetness or look on its freshness and beauty. No amount of eloquent expatiation on the ecstasies and raptures of mystic experience will ever appeal to them. It were a waste of breath and energy to try to convince them that this dip into divinity, which can make you taste all the deliciousness of Godhead in this very life, is as pure and as high as their moral codes and logical hair-splittings, that while it imitates all the ways of the earthly lover, it has exalted them beyond recognition, that though it frequently wears the garb of erotism, it has nothing whatever to do with it except in language, that in short it is so high

and so serene in its conception that it has no place in its fold for the sensualist or the sentimentalist. The Jeevanmuktas I have depicted in the above paragraphs are persons who have cut off all ties with the world and all touch with wealth and women, and who have nothing in common with the rest of mankind except the retention of their bodies. The words lust and lucre have been long ago erased out of their vocabulary. It was their first qualification for the Jeevanmuktaship. Renunciation or *vairagya*, with all that the term signifies to the metaphysician and the moralist, was their first attainment, and the farther they flew from the ordinary run of mankind which hankers after wealth and women, the nearer they felt they were drawing to their God. Their teachings amply show this. "My first lesson to you is, leave off all sense of pleasure born of sexual impulses." (*Peria Tirumozhi IX. viii. 1*) "I never mix with those of the world who are eagerly running after food and raiment, (*Perumal Tirumozhi III 4*) "I am regarded as a mad man by the whole world, and to me the whole world, with its unceasing toil in the filling of the bottomless pit, appears to be mad. What use speaking even of this? What is there in common between them and me to merit comparison?" (*Ibid 8*) "Resign and give up everything" (*Tiruvoimozhi I-ii-1*) "If attachment is severed moksha is attained." (*Ibid 5*). I suppose I have quoted enough to show that these saints have no faults or foibles to justify the imputation of unchaste thoughts and impure ideas to them.

The greatness of Sri Ramanuja is daily sung in the following strain: "He who was so deeply in love with the lotus feet of Achyuta that all the rest was regarded by him as trash." Here indeed is the paradox of attachment and renunciation co-existing in one and the same individual. But that is the paradox which lies at the root of these Sri Vaishnava Bhaktas. It is complete renunciation of the world and mad

attachment to God; thorough disgust of earthly things and passionate love of things divine; deep-rooted antipathy to pleasures born of the flesh, and consuming desire for the spiritual bliss of divine union.

What really marks off the Jeevanmukta from the rest of mankind is the organic craving which the former has for and towards God. He wants God as we all want air to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat. And just as the dearth of these, air, water and food, is our death, so the dearth of God is his death. One mystic says that his hungry days are not those on which he foregoes food and drink, but those on which he fails to worship at the Feet of the Lord, with the chosen flowers culled from the four Vedas. (Periyazhwar Tirumozhi V. i. 6) That is how they hunger for God. Lakshmana in the *Srimad Ramayana* is reported to have said that neither Sita nor he could ever live without Sri Rama, no more than can a fish lifted out of water can. There will be the continuation of life only as long as the wetness continues. That is how these Jeevanmuktas live in and by God. That mystic of mystics, Nammazhwar, who is reported to have eaten the Lord and existed in Him, says that the food that he eats, the water that he drinks, and the betel that he chews, are all God (Tiruvoimozhi VI. vii. 1) In another place this great mystic says that he praises God because that is the only way he can continue to live. In other words, worship or praise of God is to him what the breath of our nostrils is to us. The Jeevanmuktas *wanted* God in the fullest sense of the term, and having got Him and tasted of His sweetness, Grace and Beauty, are not prepared to give Him up for all the wealth and power that hold other men enslaved. They revel in the sense of freedom born of dependence on Him. *Dasya* or the attitude of the slave is the richest ambition of these Jeevanmuktas. They do not feel it as loss of independence any more than the Sovereign sitting on his throne and administering justice feels that the rules and laws of mercy and

justice he is dispensing bind him. In the very notion of boundness to God, there is the notion of freedom and independence; for is not God the very life of our lives,—Antaratma?

In their state of refined purity, the word sin has no meaning to them except separation or separateness from God. The primary notion of 'sin' is sinningness or the commission of evil deeds, thinking evil thoughts, and uttering impure words. That is what it connotes to the ordinary man. There is a higher state in which sin connotes sinfulness or the potentiality for evil, without any actual perpetration of evil deeds. This is the idea underlying the songs about sin sung by the Azhvans and the later saints such as Alavandar, Srivatsanka, and Vedanta Desika. The loftiest conception is the feeling that God-forgetfulness is sin. (மறப்பெல்லாம் ஏதம்). And the Jeevanmukta shuns and fears this மறப்பு or forgetfulness as being more poignant than sin as we understand it. And if ever he can bring his mind into praying for any wealth, this unforgetfulness is the only wealth he will pray for,—not even rebirth-less Moksha (Peria Tiruvandadi 58). This is why Kulesekhara, the author of the Mukundamala when he frames his secret prayer to be sent forth in all supplication to the Lord who can give Moksha sings thus: *Avismritis-tvat-charaavaravinde bhava bhava me astu* (Mukundamala). He is not afraid of being born again. But while he is prepared to be born and reborn in this world of sin and suffering, he prays for *Avismriti* or unforgetfulness as an antidote to all the ills of life. In another sloka, he calls this unswerving attachment to the Lord's Feet as his most cherished desire, *yetat prarthyam mama bahumatam*.

If this is the state or the attitude of the Jeevanmuktas towards the Lord, how is it reciprocated by the Lord who is so eagerly and yearningly sought after

by them? It is stated that the love that He, their Lord, bears to these Jeevanmuktas is a thousand times more intense than what they bear towards Him. While the individual soul seeks for its "other" in God, without whom it feels incomplete and forlorn, God Himself feels more incomplete and wretched without the companionship of such individual souls and is loathe to leave their side even for a second. In fact it is feelingly pointed out that He can in no way recompense these Jeevanmuktas for their all-engrossing love, except by never for a moment leaving their side. The choicest gift in His possession and power is Paramapada for which these Jeevanmuktas attach no value. So that He in His turn makes it His point always to WANT these Jeevanmuktas as sorely as they want Him, if not more. If Bharata out of his all-consuming love for Sri Rama pined for His *darshan* and kept on repeating *na-me-santir bhavishyati* (Ayodhyakanda 98, 7) Sri Rama in turn would reciprocate that feeling a thousand fold and say "I hanker to rush back to my Bharata (Yuddhakanda 124, 19) Why! In the Bhagavat Gita Sri Krishna has unambiguously declared that the Gnani who realises that God is the soul of his soul, in his turn becomes the soul of God,—*Gnanee-tu-atmaiva-me-matam*. "He regards me", says the Lord, "as his Antaratma. He knoweth not that he is My Antaratma." "The Gnani is exceedingly fond of me", says the Lord again, and adds as if His own love is less intense "I am *also* fond of him." *Sachamama priyaha*. Verily the Lord doesn't feel as if He is fully reciprocating the self-less love that he gets from those to whom He is everything. He feels sorry that their number is not numerous, for He declares that "Rarest among the rare are those who regard Me as all in all," (Gita).

It is the blessing of such great and lofty Mahatmas who are the walking Gods of this earth that can elevate ordinary mortals like us and make it possible

even for us to love, and be loved by, God in this inexpressibly passionate and sweetly divine way. And hence does Sri Yamunacharya invoke their loving and gracious *kataksha* (or look) upon himself as the surest way of becoming one of the chosen devotees of the Lord.

"O Lord! grant that I may be the recipient of the gracious glances of those Mahatmas who, in their intense longing to behold Thy rapturous Figure once, reject the pleasures of the earth and the promises of Paramapada,—and separation from whom even for a moment is to Thee most insufferable. (Stotra-Ratna, 56.)

And consistently with the wish of this great Acharya, Sri Vaishnavism has ever regarded as its ultimate goal not only *dasya* (servitude) to the Lord, but also *dasya* to the Lord's chosen, whom we have styled Jeevanmuktas.



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ERRATA

Page	Line	For	Read
6	5	tounged	tongued
8	9	Mudaliyaram	Mudal-aayiram
9	31	implores of	implores
11	8	demoustrated	demonstrated
	16	God-relaisation	God-realisation
	20	possibla	possible
14	33	began to	began
16	3	infinitismal	infinitesimal
	19	existeuce	existence
	33	bearing	hearing
17	21	endeavonr	endeavour
23	27	male	mate
	33	snn	sun
24	32	delightfull	delightful
25	5	why	as to why
26	10	though	through
27	33	eonsists	consists
29	17	glorions	glorious
31	14	it is	it
32	13	become	became
	28	not take	not to take
33	33	gfven	given
38	13	feelngs	feelings
40	17	such of	such a
	33	hetook	he took
	36	condnct	conduct
45	last line	temples,	temples.
47	3	iove	love
	11	Axhwar	Azhwar
	15	attach	attaches

Page	Line	For	Read
47	35	aud	and
48	6	known	known as
49	1	Decemeber	December
	7	developcd	developed
	14	be	he
50	3	Tiruppavai	Tiruppavai
53	33	excellence	excellence
54	14	justificatien	justification
	19	hfmself	himself
	31	commen-	commen-
55	31	V. v	V. vi
57	36	Commenteries	Commentaries
58	27	religions	religious
60	26	uext	next
61	7	envelopes	envelops
64	14	VI. i	VI. ii
	31	Tiruvoimozhi	Tiruvoimozhi
	38	bear	hear
67	9	out out	out
	13	first	first
70	12	enjoyment	enjoyment
	24	ths	the
	26	greatnsss	greatness
	29	In	in
71	3	talked	talked
	25	themselves	themselves
	36	continuaace	continuance
75	37	come	come
76	32	it not *	it is not
78	11	Bheda-bheda	Bhedaabheda
79	1	approvached	approached
80	13	meuts	ments
82	14	from	form

Page	Line	For	Read
82	21	aud	and
85	4	indivudal	individual
86	26	succint	succinct
	28	gnyatva	gnatva
87	14	be	he
89	18	Tatparaya	Tatparya
91	17	presenc	presence
93	11	intensly	intensely
96	7	It	it
	13	ns	us
	19	glorius	glorious
97	1	whero	where
	10	and and	and
101	16	unambiguous	unambiguous
102	17	prepard	prepared
	24	Jive	Jiva
	25	net	not
	31	inquiring	inquiring
103	1	unambiguous	unambiguous
	8	be	he
	11	reiterations	reiterations
	15	maters	matters
	21	for the	for
	36	notorieity	notoriety
	37	Limitatiou	Limitation
104	10	mattey	matter
	14	Ther	There
106	12	Exhiht	Exhibit
	21	I my	In my
108	24	thc	the
109	3	constel lation	constellation
	26	thc	the
111	6	intallect	intellect

Page	Line	For	Read
112	3	the conuntry	the country
113	5	Bnt	But
	7	the	the
114	1	inveriaibly	invariably
117	9	unapproachabla	unapproachable
	24	complex	complex
	32	sincers	sincere
118	36	prescribled	prescribed
120	29	only	only
121	26	mnst	must
	27	comprebend	comprehend
	32	be	he
122	26	wlth	with
124	34	a has	has a
129	13	conttnuing	continuing
130	3	modelləd	modelled
132	20	deparature	departure
	22	he	be
133	32	uow	now
134	13	wfth	with
	16	beiuę	being
	18	sustenance	sustenance
	29	higher	higher
136	37	recognition	recognition
138	13	Feet	Feet
	14	Vedas	Vedas
	16	than can	than
	35	then	than



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